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THE MYSTERY OF THE WOODS

AND

THE MAN WHO MISSED IT

BY

W. H. H. MURRAY

AUTHOR OF "DAYLIGHT LAND," "ADVENTURES IN THE WILDERNESS," "HOW JOHN NORTON THE TRAPPER KEPT HIS CHRISTMAS," ETC.

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PART I.

THE MYSTERY OF THE WOODS.

THE MYSTERY OF THE WOODS.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

It was evening. The last suggestion of daylight had faded out in the atmosphere, and the densest gloom enveloped the mountain-sides, and lay as with a pressure on the lake. The darkness was not such as clouds make; it was not the darkness of a veiled sky, of an obscured firmament, but of air possessed through and through, and thick with blackness. A hot night it was, and utterly calm. Not a movement in the air; not a movement on the water; not a sound stirred an aërial wave overhead. Even the loons floated through the gloom without a cry; and the birds of night, perched among the pines, sent forth neither challenge nor call.

Amid the gloom a boat was moving, — moving leisurely on as if he who guided its motion, either by reason of weariness or indolence of mood, was pleased with easy progress. It was so dark that the old Trapper, — for it was he who sat in the stern of the boat, plying with easy stroke his favorite paddle, — could not by any effort of sight catch even the outline of the

shores or discern the edges of the islands past which he steered. It was from instinct rather than vision that the old man threaded his way around the points that projected into the lake, and the angles of the islands that lay athwart his course. He was on his return from a trip of several days' duration, which he had made to the south, and being within a few miles of his cabin felt no impulse to hasten. Indeed, the very warmth of the night, the intense darkness, and the perfectly level condition of the water, made the leisurely movement more enjoyable. The still air was full of odors which the balsams and cedars along the lake shore yielded forth, and the warm atmosphere most agreeable to the senses. He had reached the southern extremity of the last island which lay athwart his course, and was within a few miles of the bay at the head of which his cabin stood. Directing the movement of his boat a little farther out into the lake, he passed along within a few rods of the silent shore. Thus moving easily forward, he came to the northern point of the island, and as he passed around the extreme projection, he suddenly reversed his paddle and brought his boat to a stop.

The reason of this action was evident. On the main shore, within a short half mile of where he sat, a camp-fire was burning, the bright flame of which lighted the dark branches of the pines above it, the bright stretch of beach in front, and sent its lanes of light sharply out into the gloom that hung above the motionless surface of the lake.

For a moment the old Trapper sat in his boat looking at the fire and the objects grouped around it; evidently men, although at the distance he could not make out clearly their personal appearance. He had only left the lake himself two days before, and when he left it there was no sign of any such party's arrival; no forerunner, as is often the case when a large party make preparation for encampment.

"It sartinly is a leetle queer that so big a party should have come in without any notice of their comin'," muttered the old Trapper to himself; "yis, it's sartinly a leetle queer, for I axed Wild Bill himself, — and he had jest come through the Regis waters, — ef there was anybody comin' in, and he said — and I don't see why the man, ef he be a half vagabond, should lie in sech a matter — he said there wasn't a sign of a party's comin' in from the Canada line to the Racquette. No, I don't believe that Bill would lie without a mo*tive*, for that's agin natur', as I conceit; and sartin it is that his eye is quicker on a trail than a good many that don't love the bottle as much as Bill does. And yit, day afore yisterday, Bill told me that there wasn't a sign of a party atween the Canada line and the Racquette, where the crick without a stone enters it. And still there be a fire and there be men round it, half a dozen, more or less, and the big shanty is full of stuff; and there be two small tents, and there be a big un atween the other tents and the shanty. Lord! I sartinly hope that they have brought in a jestice of the peace with 'em and a Moravian missioner, so

that they can start their settlement in regular city fashion.

"I sartinly never expected to see a dozen men campin' on one p'int in a lake where the pups and me have lived half as many years and never seed their numbers doubled. I guess I'll paddle in and say a cheerful word to 'em, and let 'em know they are sorter welcome; leastwise as much as they can reasonably expect to be by a man who loves the silence of the woods, and wishes they wa'n't within fifty mile of him. Yis, yis," said the old man to himself, as he paddled on, "I conceit jest how their axes will sound to-morrer mornin', for the city folks use their axes without any jedgment. No, the pups and me won't have much peace for sartin'; for atween their axes and their pieces they'll distarb the peace of natur', and make this lake more like a Dutch settlement than a pleasant spot for a man of my years and gifts to live in. Lord-a-massy! jest see that chap throw on the wood, as ef it didn't take the Lord a hundred year to grow them sticks. And here the air is hot enough to smother ye. And I've sartinly heerd the mutter of thunder west of the mountain twice already sence I turned the island's p'int. And ef the Lord don't talk to 'em afore mornin' in a way that will make 'em shake, it'll be because he's got careless himself techin' the wasteful ways of them that he permits to use the things he has growed."

As the Trapper had said, one of the six men that sat round the fire had risen, and after throwing on

several armfuls of pine logs — quarterings from a huge trunk that lay stretched within twenty feet of the blaze — had rejoined the group, which, on rising, he had left. The old Trapper, in the mean time, was paddling, with rather rapid motion, in: and by the time that the flames had reached that degree of brightness to reveal minutely the surroundings, the earnestness of his stroke had brought him within twenty rods of the beach. It was not in accordance with the habits of the man to run a boat in carelessly upon a party unknown to him; and while for the last twenty rods of his progress he had continued to ply his paddle with regulated motions, his eyes had been scanning with intent earnestness every object in and about the camp that he was so rapidly nearing. Nor had his mind been less active than his eye. By the time that he had reached the distance we have mentioned, enough of the camp and its occupants had come within his observation to reveal to him the fact that it was no ordinary party of sportsmen or pleasure seekers that composed it: and with this conclusion the old Trapper had again brought his boat to a stop, and with the trained sight of an experienced scout, sharpened, to say the least, by intent curiosity, he was studying its every detail. And this is what the old Trapper saw:

A level stretch of water edging itself against the bright beach, whose soft yellow sands swept their easy ascent up some forty feet, till they came to the roots of the great pines that grew upon the mossy border of

the upland. Amid the pines a cleared opening, a dozen rods, perhaps, in diameter. On the beach were boats; above, a camp-fire of generous size, as we have described; on the water-side two men were sitting on a log with their backs to the lake; beyond the fire a shanty made of bark, with twenty feet front; in the shanty three men were playing cards — playing as men play when under great excitement, perhaps the excitement of liquor; for they were noisy, and oaths were not infrequent. Back, and a little to the right of the shanty, was a large tent whose canvas door — if door it had — was closely tied. The flame of the fire brought it into bright relief. In the rear of the tent were two smaller tents; one pitched a little to the right, the other a little to the left of it. In front of the large tent, half-hidden in shadow, the old Trapper's quick eye detected the form of a man reclining — perhaps asleep. A little to the left of the camp-fire, resting on logs, with one end against the roots of a tree, was a small barrel, and on it a tin cup. While the old Trapper was noting the scene in front of him, one of the players left the game, and going to the cask filled the tin cup from its contents and drank it, then returned and with a dreadful oath reseated himself at the game.

The men were all heavily bearded and as heavily armed; for in the belt of each was a knife; and suspended from the roof of the shanty, the old Trapper's eye caught the dull gleam of rifle barrels and burnished pistol stocks.

For ten full minutes, perhaps, the old Trapper sat

studying the scene in front of him; and it must be confessed that the more he noted the party the more was he surprised at their appearance. He even moved his boat to different points that he might the more perfectly study the encampment from different angles of vision.

"I've seed a good many queer camps," said the old man to himself, "yis, I've seed a good many queer camps; for I have seed them who call themselves sportsmen come in from the settlements to the woods to riot, and to shame the beasts with their drinkin'; and that barrel there sartinly p'ints in that direction. I run acrost a camp of gamblers once, on the Grass River, and they sartinly was as nigh the devil's own children as the Lord can permit on the arth if he takes any notice of right and wrong, and what is decent and sober-like. Up in the fur country I've seed the off-scourin' of the arth, and I sartinly did my part to help the Lord out in his managin' of the scamps. But here be a party that I can't understand — no, the signs isn't plain about that camp yender. It may be that they are only city chaps that have come into the woods to carouse, and their knives and their pistols be only for show, and their keerd playin' only in sport; although by the way they're talkin' I should sartinly jedge they was gittin' considerably in arnest. But" — and the old man started his boat straight toward the beach — "I'll go in and speak 'em fair, whoever they may be, and give 'em a kind of cheerful welcome. Yis, I'll act as man should act toward his fellow-bein's

in the woods, and perhaps they'll take a little jedicious advice from a man who has lived twice their number of years, and has arnt the right to give counsel to them that be younger. Yis, I'll go in and see who they be anyway."

So saying, the old Trapper started for the beach.

It may have been merely the result of long habit; it may have been the result of intention born from the feeling of uncertainty touching the character of the camp into which he was going; but from whatever cause the result may have proceeded, he could not have ambushed a camp of enemies with greater skill or laid his light boat up more noiselessly against the soft sands of the beach. Indeed, he did not allow it to touch the sands at all; but before the water shallowed to that extent which forbade progress, he lifted himself from his seat with the steady poise and balance of a perfect boatman, and with his rifle in his left hand, and with the finger of his right resting upon the rim of his boat, he stepped noiselessly into the water; and with the easiest of motion lifted the bow of the boat gently up and laid it noiselessly upon the soft beach. Standing within fifty feet of the fire he paused a moment and steadily looked the camp over.

Had it not been for the position of those that occupied it, he could not have been unobserved; for the fire brought his stalwart form into full view. But those who were within the shanty were too much interested in their exciting game to notice any one beyond their circle; the two men sitting by the fire

were so seated that their backs were directly toward the Trapper; while the huge form that lay stretched in front of the large white tent suggested that it belonged to one who was fast asleep.

For a moment the Trapper thus stood; and then his moccasined feet began to move slowly and noiselessly up the sand. Perhaps it was only habit quickened by the memory of some more perilous venture in the years past; perhaps it was the suggestion of some lurking humor that made him move as carefully upon the men as if they were his foes, and his own safety lay in getting them within easy sweep of his rifle stock. No matter from what cause, his approach was so noiseless that far more trained ears than those in that camp would have been unable to catch the light step as it moved up the yielding sand and trod softly forward over the pine-tasselled ground. He approached within a yard of the two men sitting with their backs toward him on the log, when again he paused, and, standing as erect as a statue and as motionless, scanned the unusual scene. His countenance showed that he was not entirely satisfied with the character of the company into whose midst he had stolen; for in the expression of his face a look of amusement was blended with intense curiosity, while the least shade of suspicion looked out of his eyes and played like a variable shadow over his features.

It was while he was thus standing in full light of the rising flame, and within an arm's length of the two men sitting on the log unconscious of his presence, that

the eyes of one of the three men who were gambling in the shanty, while he was in the very act of lifting, with a flourish, his last card into the air to play it, chanced, as he raised his head, to fall directly upon him.

The shock of the surprise was so tremendous that, for a moment, animation seemed suspended; for his arm remained lifted in the air at that point he had raised it; his mouth fairly opened and his eyes stood fixed in astonishment, while the oath he was uttering remained half unspoken. His excitement with electric swiftness communicated itself to his two companions. They wrenched themselves round on their stools and, with the look of terror on their swarthy faces, stared as fixedly as had their companion at the figure before them.

It was at this moment, and utterly unconscious of his companions' excitement and of the presence of the man who stood within arm's reach of him, that one of the men on the log rose to his feet and turned abruptly round, yawning, as he turned, toward the lake. Few men could have borne the shock in silence, at least his nerves were unable to bear up against the surprise; for as his eyes met the eyes of the Trapper, out of his mouth came a yell such as only can be given in extreme terror; while in his effort to jump aside he actually tumbled over his companion and both rolled upon the ground.

But certainly there was nothing at which to be frightened in the look of the Trapper's face; for, instead of being the countenance of one bent on deadly work, it

was the countenance of one lightened with humor even unto laughter.

"I ax yer pardin," said the Trapper, speaking to the two men who had been sitting on the log, and who were picking themselves up from the earth; "I ax yer pardin fur comin' on ye so sudden like, but"—

"What right had you," exclaimed the man who had tumbled over his companion, "what right had you—damn you!—to come stealing up like a sneak on a man sitting by his own fire in that way?"

"Lord-a-massy, friend, ye needn't be so arnest about the matter. There's no great damage done, anyway, as I can see. Ye sartinly did make a pretty lively jump, but ye be young yit, and a jump more or less don't hurt a man, as I conceit. And as for stealin' up on ye, I did ambush ye a leetle, that's a fact; but it's only because it sorter comes nateral to one whose moccasins larnt the ways of a trail in the old wars to step sorter easy like, but it may be I should have hailed ye and come in more noisy; an' ef my comin' has distarbed ye any, I'm sorry for it, and ax yer pardin, although I meant no evil. No, I sartinly meant no evil."

By this time the three men who had been gambling in the shanty had joined the two by the fire, and they were now standing in a group fronting him, staring with lowering faces at the intruder.

"What right have you to come into this camp, anyway, without an invitation?" said one of the men, determinedly.

"Right to come into a camp!" rejoined the Trapper. "Who hasn't the right to come into a camp in peace time? and this is sartinly in peace time. And as for an invitation, as ye call it, ye must be a stranger to the woods not to know that a camp-fire itself is an invite for any man that passes to come in and warm himself ef he be cold, or cook his venison ef he be hungry, and have a cheerful word with them that built it."

"How do you know that you were wanted here?" retorted the one who had constituted himself the spokesman of the party.

"I don't understand ye," said the Trapper.

"I asked you a plain question," said the man, and his tones came out clean-cut as a knife. "I asked you a plain question, and if you can't understand it perhaps we'll find a way to increase your wits," and he tapped the handle of his knife with his finger significantly, while the others laughed insultingly.

"Yis, yis, I understand ye now," said the Trapper, and his eyes darkened their shade by a trifle. "I understand ye now, young man, but ye needn't be so sassy about it. I played the leetle game ye hinted at afore ye was born, and ye needn't tap the handle of yer knife there as ef ye was talkin' to a lad from the settlements, or a redskin afore his face has knowed the color of the paint. But I suppose that motion of yer finger was only a leetle bit of pleasantry on yer part, young man."

"Look here," retorted the other, "we ain't boys who make up this crowd. There's no one here that hasn't

handled the knife, and handled it when it was red, blade and handle both. And now, as I can see you are a man accustomed to plain talk, I might as well say to you that we are here on our own business, and this is our camp, and you are not wanted here, and the sooner you clear out the better it'll be for you. Do you understand that?"

"Sartin, sartin," answered the Trapper. "You've got a chipper tongue atween yer teeth, young man, and ye rather love to move it, as I conceit. Yis, this is yer camp, as ye say, and a little onsartin kind of a camp it is, too; for, atween yer canoes, that I see was made in the fur country, and yer gamblin', and yer drinkin', and yer sassy tongue, and that big tent there, that's big enough for a gineral, and hasn't any door onless it opens on the back side — which isn't jest the way that folks who come up here for sight-seein' pitch their tents — and sartin other signs I noted as I stood lookin' at ye afore ye seed me, yer camp is the most onsartin one I ever seed; and ef it ain't agin yer wishes, I would like to ax what sort of a camp ye've got here, and what game do ye mean to strike?"

"You'll get none of your questions answered by me," replied the man, "and the sooner the talking is ended the better. I've told you that this was our camp, and that you are not wanted in it; and now, let me ask, do you propose to leave it?"

"Sartin," said the Trapper. "Ef ye'd been civil in yer speech and friendly in yer acts I might have br'iled a strip of venison here by yer fire, and, for that matter,

slept with ye till mornin' jest to show my good feelin' towards ye; for my cabin is only a few mile away, and I can easily paddle down. But as ye seem to be out of sorts, and not over given to friendliness, and a leetle onsartin in yer morals, as I conceit, I'm parfectly ready to go; but not in any hurry, young man; no, not in any hurry. Ye needn't look so sassy like out of yer eyes, for I've taken the measure of ye, and, though ye be five to me one, yit I don't propose to go in any hurry. And as ye have axed me a question, I'd like to ax it back to ye ag'in. And the question I'd like to ax is, that when I say I don't intend to be in any hurry, ef ye five chaps understand *me?*" and the lines of the old man's face tightened a trifle, and the slightest of tremors ran through his tone.

The answer that the man gave was what one would expect only from the most desperate of characters. The guns of the party were in the shanty, as were their pistols also. The only weapon about their persons was the large knife each carried. As the Trapper closed his interrogation, the man to whom he especially addressed it dashed the knife that he had already drawn upon the ground, and gave a spring toward the shanty. He gave one jump and stopped, for his quick eye told him that the muzzles of the Trapper's rifle exactly covered his body, and that another jump would doubtless cost him his life.

"Yer actions are not without reason," said the Trapper coolly, "and ye acted with jedgment when ye stopped where ye was, for I saw shootin' in yer eye,

and when it comes to shootin', the quickest trigger gits the fust shot. No, no, don't ye move a step toward that shanty, but come back to the spot where ye started, and let me ax ye a question. And don't ye try any of yer tricks on an old man whose temper ye've jest a leetle riled, for my finger is inside the guard and the lock works quick; so come back and stand there where ye was, and let me ax ye a question."

The man did as he was commanded. Indeed there was nothing else for him to do; for his life lay at the mercy of the man, who, without moving his rifle from the hollow of his arm, had nevertheless centred his body with the muzzle.

The man returned to his place in the group by the fire. He was brave, that was beyond question, and his self-possession was perfect. For he picked the knife from the sod where he had cast it, and as he returned it to its sheath, he looked straight into the old man's eyes, and said in the coolest and calmest of tones, —

"Take the pile, old man, you hold the two bowers." And the laugh that he laughed showed his white teeth as he nodded at the muzzles of the double rifle.

"Ye have axed me to leave yer camp," said the old man, after a moment's pause — during which he had looked the five men over from head to foot — "ye have axed me to leave yer camp, and it's only reasonable that I should do as ye want me to do. Ye have said some things to me that ye oughtn't to have said, and ye've been sorter loose and careless in yer speech; but I sartinly won't hold it agin ye ef nothin' furder happens,

for I wish to live in peace with ye ef it be possible, for I've seed enough of war; and a white head loves a peaceful pillow. Yis, I come in peace, and as there has been a leetle playfulness atween us here, I would like to ax ye ef I shall go in peace?"

For a moment the five men looked at each other, and at length the man whose body the muzzle of the Trapper's rifle still covered, and who had been the spokesman of the party thus far, said, —

"Look here, old man, we are here for a purpose, and we are here under orders. What our purpose is, is none of your business, and our orders are not to let a man come into this camp, and if a man gets in, not to let him go out alive; but you hold the bowers, and I, for one, surrender the pile. You go in peace because we can't stop you, that's all there is about it. You come once and you go once; but if you're wise you won't try it again."

"Hoot!" said the Trapper, "I've lived in these woods eighty year, off and on, and there never was a camp of white or redskin I didn't dare enter. And leetle there be in this camp that my eyes won't see afore a week passes, and few be the sounds that ye make that my ears won't hear. And ef ye've got any secret that ye don't want an honest man to know, and ef ye've come in on any devilment, ye look to yerselves, for John Norton will find out yer secret, and fetch ye up in yer devilment."

At the mention of the old man's name the five started, and they whispered rapidly to each other; and

it was evident that from whatever section of the world they had come, there the name that the old man spoke and the fame of it had penetrated.

"Are you John Norton the scout?" asked the man who had done the talking for the group.

"Yis, I be John Norton," answered the old man, "and I've did a good deal of scoutin' off and on in my life, but now that times be peaceful, as they should be, I be nothin' better then a trapper. And now," continued the old man, "as it's gittin' a leetle late, and ye say that my room is better than my company, I'm goin' to my boat. Ye don't look to me," said the old man significantly, as he ran his eye over the group, "ye don't look to me as ef ye had lived accordin' to the Lord's app'intment, and I conceit that a leetle more life and a good deal more righteousness wouldn't hurt yer chances at the jedgment. And ef ye don't happen to be in a hurry about leavin' the arth, I'd advise ye to stand jest where ye be while I'm gittin' off from yer camp; for the light ye stand in is a strong un and the sights would show fine; and the two of ye that move first from the tracks where ye stand till ye hear the call of a loon from the lake, will go to the Jedgment with a hole through yer bodies that the Lord will know at a glance; for a good many vagabonds, as I jedge ye to be, have carried the size of my bullets into etarnity afore now. So ye jest stand where ye be till ye hear the cry of a loon, onless ye be in a hurry to die."

So saying, the old man, with his head turned over

the left shoulder, the barrel of his rifle resting in the hollow of his left arm, with both hammers cocked and his finger within the guard, strode down to his boat, entered it, and backed it out into the lake. The five men stood in their tracks; suddenly they started, for out of the darkness came the call of a loon, strong and clear, so that the echoes, far up the mountain, answered back the prolonged note through the gloom.

"Cleaned out!" said the spokesman of the party, as he turned toward the shanty. "I wonder what the captain will say when he comes."

CHAPTER II.

In the morning the Trapper rose at the usual hour. It was his habit in the summer time to rise with the sun; and his custom each morning after rising, and before he had begun the morning tasks, to go and open the great wide door of his cabin, and, standing on the threshold with uncovered head, look out upon the world as it stood revealed in the dewy light of morning. We cannot say what his thoughts were, but judging by the looks of his face they were such as a man at peace with himself, and at peace with his Maker, when looking at the beautiful works of His hands in their loveliest phase, might have. Indeed, his countenance at such times, in the peaceful gravity and grateful happiness of its expression, was a picture of so fine a sort as to remain for years fresh and unfaded in memory's hall. If the day through the delightful coolness of its air, the cool stretch of water, the distant mountains, and the newly-risen sun, breathed a benediction upon him, in the grateful, reverent, and happy reflection of his heart, he seemed to pronounce a benediction upon the day; for, in the old man was that fine sense of appreciation, that childlike quality of greeting anything beautiful as a surprise, that to his simple mind caused each morning to seem not merely as the beginning of a new day but a new beginning of the world.

This morning, as he stood barefooted and with uncovered head in the doorway that opened toward the east, the beauty of the outward appearance was so extraordinary as to fill his receptive mind with reverent wonder.

"The Lord is sartinly great in his power, and great is he in his wisdom," said the old man talking to himself, as the winds of the morning played on his brow, and the light of the rising sun warmed his features with its glow, "for his devices be many, and the beauty of his doing beyend man's thinkin'. I have lived on the 'arth till my head be whitenin' and studied natur' with an eye marcifully fitted for notin' things, but sartin it is that the 'arth grows han'somer each year, and the mornin's as they foller each other be prittier and prittier. I sartinly hope that the Lord has a nose to smell the sweet things he has made; and that his ear this minute hears that robin as he strains his leetle throat on that maple out there; and he sartinly loses a good deal ef he don't come down off and on and take a look at the woods from the top of Mount Seward there, not to speak of the streams, and the lakes, and the sunrises and sunsets that he might see from that p'int ef he chose the spot for his outlook with jedgment. And there's sartinly some bends in the Racquette that he orter look at more'n once; for Henry says that the Racquette is the han'somest river in the world, and Henry is careful of speech, and his jedgment is good," and here the old man paused a moment, and a yearning look came into his face, and

his eyes changed their expression so that, though open, they seemed not to see, at least, see nothing nigh; for to them came a far-away look as if their vision had overleaped the mountain, and was stretched to see the distant and, to him, the unknown world of cities and crowding men beyond their blue rim; and then he said, —

"May the Lord forgive the discontent of my sperit when his marcies be round me thicker than the pine-stems on the ground; but I must own that I feel a leetle lonesome at times, and the sight of the boy's face would be sweeter to me this minit than the sight of the mornin'. It may not be right to have such feelin's, and I trust the Lord will look in marcy on the weakness ef he be displeased at the cravin'. And I have fought agin it, — yis, I have fought agin it, for fear it wasn't right; for it's wrong for mortal man not to be content with enough, — and I sartinly have enough: victals to eat and good strong garments, and a rod that the boy himself gave me, and a *wee*pon that a man can trust his life to; and the pups — yis, the pups be a great comfort, — sartinly, I ought to be content and not wish for anything more, — leastwise, not crave it with yearnin'. And yit, ef I could hear the crack of the boy's piece a mile or two down the river this minit, and know that he was actally comin', I doubt ef the thought of all His goodness — well, well," muttered the old man, as he turned back into the cabin, "sunrise is sunrise, and Henry is Henry, and it's the Lord's own temptin' when he gives to a man of

my years two sech boys as he gin me: Henry and the Lad;" and he paused a moment and gazed at the two picture-frames hanging on the wall, — the one filled with the portrait of Henry, the other empty to all eyes but his; but to his eyes the empty frame was filled with a simple, innocent, heroic face that he and Henry had buried under the pine in the grave by the sea.

Half an hour later the old Trapper was seated at his table, enjoying with finest relish a breakfast which, in variety of food, was limited; but in delicacy of quality would have satisfied the cultivated taste of an epicure. The two hounds were sitting on their haunches at the end of the table, looking at the eater with that most wistful and imploring of all looks — the look of a hungry dog.

"I tell ye, pups," said the old man, as he stopped for a moment in his eating — holding between his thumb and forefinger a trout small of size and brown to a turn, — "I tell ye, pups, ye ain't more than half-mannered. Ye act well enough, for ye keep yer places; but yer looks be onusually arnest; and I can't take hold of a morsel without yer looking as ef it belonged to ye, and I was sorter robbin' ye in eatin' it myself. Now, Rover, ye ain't rational. What's the use of givin' ye sech a trout as that? Ef ye swallered it ye wouldn't know where 'twas; and a boatload of sech fish wouldn't fill ye. I heerd Henry say one day that there was a kind of men down in the settlements that would eat an' eat, and the more they'd eat the thinner

they'd git. The victals didn't seem to do 'em any good; didn't fill 'em up and thicken 'em out; and a man whose emptiness can't be filled with swallerin' is" — and here the old man paused a moment, evidently at fault for a word. But human nature in the hunter's cabin is very like human nature — well, in a pulpit, say, — and so the old Trapper backed up verbally for a new start, and, with an earnestness and unction entirely uncalled for by the exigency of the case, exclaimed, as he flourished the trout, "A man whose emptiness can't be filled by swallerin' is a miracle! Sartin, sartin!" said the Trapper, as if relieved. "Lord, what things words be! and how they relieve the feelin's when ye drive 'em out with a leetle more'n ord'nary arnestness!"

With such remarks, half serious and half humorous, the old Trapper was accustomed to enliven his repast. The hounds, with the facility of canine intelligence, had become entirely familiar with the programme, and no one could see them and not feel that they had become so wonted to the discourse of the Trapper as to give countenance to his belief, that, beyond what is expected of their species, the dogs understood the drift of his remarks. Indeed, there seemed to be a subtle understanding between the three that inhabited the cabin, for more than one stranger had noted that the hounds shared the mood of their master, and that their companionship rested on the foundation of mutual sympathy. That the Trapper's belief in the capacity of his canine companions to understand was entirely sincere,

no one who watched his treatment of them could for a moment doubt.

When the old Trapper had finished his breakfast he moved, as was his custom, his chair back from the table, and, facing round toward the hounds, proceeded to give them their repast. The dogs took their position, one at either knee, and with a decorum which would have done credit to human members of a civilized community, received their allotted portions, eating the morsels, as the old Trapper fed them alternately, in grave but grateful silence.

"Well, well," said the Trapper, while thus deliberately feeding his dogs, "how happy-like it makes a man feel to feed somethin' that's hungry! Now, pups, I don't conceit, knowin' as yè be, that ye know the happiness it gives me to give ye the morsels that ye're swallerin'. I dare say ye feel happy-like yerselves, — yis, I know ye do, for a dog can't lie with his tail, and the way ye be waggin' 'em is sartinly proof that yer sperits be peaceful, and yer eyes shine like the eyes of a leetle redskin when ye give him a trinket. The Maker of the 'arth must sartinly be happy to see the creeturs that he's made at their feedin'. I've often conceited that he kept his eye on things a leetle closer than the missioners preach, and it may be that he gits a good deal of his happiness in makin' the creeturs he has made comfortable, and watchin' them as they go about on their business, each arter his natur'. There, pups, ye've eaten the last morsel, and ye've had a mighty small meal, jedgin' by yer size, for ye're both

as ga'nt as ye was when I started; but I've given ye a good meal, and though I know how yer innards are put together, yit I never could understand how one of yer kind, Rover, could eat as much as ye can, and look no bigger arter ye'd eaten than afore ye'd begun. It may be," said the old man calculatingly, "it may be my eyes be a leetle faulty, but I've conceited more'n once, Rover, that the more I fed ye the ga'nter ye got. I can say in sartinty that I never seed ye filled yit, or turn yer muzzle from a morsel that was offered ye."

The old Trapper cleared away the dishes, and, after he had swept the floor and brought a fresh pail of water from the spring, stood for a moment in the centre of the cabin. The look on his face was the look of a man engaged in profoundest thought, — of a man studying a subject that the more he studied the more it puzzled him. In a few moments he took his rifle from the brackets, and going to the doorway, he stepped forth, and, seating himself on a bench, called the dogs to his side, and said, —

"Pups, I be worried in my mind. Yis, I sartinly be worried nigh on to frettin', and a man who worries unto frettin' does a most onrational deed. And ef ye want to know what it's about, pups, I'll tell ye. Rover, do keep yer mouth shet! It worries me to see ye lap yer chops in that way. Why don't ye keep yer manners when ye be in council? It's that camp down there, — that camp on the p'int. I run in on it last night, Rover, and though I used my eyes in a jedicious manner, and seed about all there was to see outside of

canvas, yit I am not sure that I seed all; no, I'm not sure I seed all," repeated the old man with emphasis. "There's too much tent on that p'int, pups; there is a good deal too much tent," and here the old man paused, and, taking a piece of buckskin from his pocket, he rubbed the silver plate on the cheek-piece of his rifle, on which his name was graven; and then, resuming, he said, —

"They're a hard set; they're a harder set than I ever seed in the fur country, them chaps be. Now I know a vagabond, whether he be half-breed, white, or red-skin, — that is, sech vagabonds as we have in the woods, — but them chaps down there be another sort. I doubt ef one of 'em could tell a buck's track from a doe. They don't look as ef they was raised in the woods. They look a good deal like them sort of chaps Henry told me about. He said there was a kind of vagabonds in the cities that took their schoolin' from the devil at the start, and growed into wickedness as they growed into strength; larnt themselves all evil ways, and didn't fear God nor man," and here the old man paused again, and taking the caps from the hammers, he wiped the tubes with the buckskin rag. "And I sartinly conceit," resumed the old man, as if he had not lost his thread of thought, "that them vagabonds be city vagabonds, and a sassy set they be, too. And the chap that drawed his knife on me drawed it as ef he'd drawed it a good many times, and acted jest as ef he'd used it a good many times. And he had a quick eye, too, and a sort of a rational way with him, for he

wasn't long in finding out that I'd covered him when he jumped; and he sartinly stopped at the right p'int, for ef he had taken another jump I'd opened daylight through him. Brave? Yis, he's brave and he's cool, and a man that faces that chap on equal tarms would have to do pritty quick work to save his life, as I jedge.

"How did they git in?" said the Trapper, after a moment's pause; "I see by yer eye, Rover, that ye think some one guided 'em in, and ye're right; and whoever guided them chaps in, knowed enough to wash his trail clean out on the carries, for Wild Bill said that there wasn't a sign of a party in all the north country. And the question comes up, who was cap'en of that gang? for he must be the man that guided 'em in;" and here the old man paused again, and placing a couple of caps on the tubes of his rifle, he raised it to his eye and fired. The smoke cleared in an instant, and the report of the left barrel followed the right.

"I thought it would," said the trapper to himself, "for it's been loaded a week, and the fog was heavy as I come through the Chain of the Lakes. Yis, that left barrel barnt a leetle slow, and the hole is bigger by half the width of the lead than it ought to be. It isn't much; no, it isn't much; the half the width of a bullet at fifty paces, but it's more by half a bullet than it would be ef the powder had been perfectly dry. I won't drive home another bullet till I have taken the breech pins out and made the barrels shine, for there's no tellin' what's ahead; no, pups, there's no tellin' what's ahead; and ef they should git sassy, down

there on the p'int, and Henry be late in comin' in, it may be that lead will be flyin' round here afore a week;" and then, as a graver expression came over the old man's face, he said: —

"I hope not; I sartinly hope not; for ef they should try to play any of their pranks on me there'd be close work round the shores of this lake, for they be five to my one; and the leader of the gang wasn't there last night, for sartin."

An hour later, the old Trapper had finished cleaning his rifle, and standing in the spot where we left him soliloquizing he was in the act of loading. Even an ordinary observer would have noticed that he paid more than average attention to the charging; and when the act was accomplished he lifted it to his cheek and ran his eye through the sights. And then dropping the barrel into the hollow of his left arm, he gazed for a moment out upon the lake, and muttered to himself: —

"I'll ambush that camp to-night; there's deviltry somewhere there for sartin. Ef I knew who the leader was, the riddle would be half guessed. And then there's that big tent with no door to it, leastwise none that opens toward the lake, as it oughter ef it be a pleasure tent. And the question arises, what's in that tent? Why be they so skeered that an honest man should come into their camp? Why be they in sech a hurry to git him out? Why do they draw a knife on a man because he axes a question? Lord!" said the old man, "what good things habits be. Now

ef I'd left my rifle down in the boat, and that chap had drawed the knife on me, there would have been a scrimmage sure as jedgment; but I lined him as he jumped, and that helped things toward peace. No man's a right to leave his gun in the boat when he goes into a strange camp ef he wants to have a peaceable time.

"Then there was a man in front of that tent; I seed him; and when the talkin' got arnest why didn't he come down and jine in? He acted a good deal as ef he was put there to stay; and a man don't do sentinel duty in front of an empty tent. I tell ye," said the old man, and he brought his fist down into the open palm of his other hand, "I tell ye there's somethin' in that tent, and John Norton will find out what it is, ef the clouds be thick to-night."

The clouds were thick at night, thick as nature could pile above the earth. The darkness was of the kind that could be felt. It was just the night the Trapper would have wished in which to attempt the deed he was about to do. In the bottom of the boat he had spread a blanket. On the blanket he placed his rifle, and by its side an extra paddle. Thus, perfectly prepared for the work he was to do, the old Trapper entered the boat, and shoving off, started up the lake.

In less than an hour's time, he reached the vicinity of the camp. But instead of there being a large, clear flame rising upward, the camp-fire was of very moderate dimensions, scarcely lighting the interior of the

shanty, and only bringing dimly into view the three neighboring tents.

"The vagabonds larn a lesson quick," said the Trapper to himself. "A jedicious hint about the big fire, and the way in which it helped a man to draw on 'em, has sartinly larnt them economy techin' the use of wood. But ef a low fire sarves them, it sartinly sarves me; for I can lay myself up within fifty feet of the beach, and onless their eyes be better than I think, they won't know what eyes be on 'em, and what ears be listenin' to 'em. They'll have to talk a good deal lower than they did the other night, ef they don't want to be heared by the man they treated onreasonably the fust time he called on 'em."

Talking thus to himself he moved his boat in toward the beach. He doubled the point that stretched out to the right of the camp, and inspected it as well as he could in the dim light, from the further side.

Little was to be seen beyond what he had already seen. The camp was nearly hidden in the darkness, and only a murmur of voices came to his ears. He moved his boat round to the front again, and laid it up almost against the sands of the beach. Indeed, it was not ten feet from the beach when he brought it to a stand, and sat straining his ears to catch the murmuring conversation; but strive never so hard, he could not make out what they were saying. He heard his own name mentioned twice, and one or two oaths came to him distinctly; but, beyond this, his efforts were unavailing; and had it not been for a sudden and

unexpected occurrence, he would have backed his boat from that beach into deeper waters, no wiser as to the character or plans of the party, no wiser as to their leader's name, and no wiser as to the contents of the big tent than when he came. But something did happen, — happen suddenly; happened in a way that would have proved fatal to a man of less experience and fertility of resource than was the Trapper.

The Trapper had left the stern of his boat, and stepping softly along the blanket that lay stretched on the bottom, was now kneeling at the forward end, — kneeling, with his left hand laid on the gunwale and his paddle grasped in his right struck into the sands by which to steady himself as he kneeled, bent forward, in the attitude of listening. As he thus knelt, with his body projecting forward, and all his senses strained to the utmost tension, fastened on the camp and its occupants barely fifty feet in front of him, another boat, moving as noiselessly as had his and more rapidly, from the lake toward the beach, struck his fair in the end, and out of a man's mouth, not twenty feet back of him, tore a frightful oath.

It was well for the Trapper that he was kneeling and well braced when his boat received the shock, or he would have been pitched forward on to the sanded beach. The instant that the oath sounded in the darkness back of him, the camp was in an uproar. The men who had been sitting in the shanty, only partially revealed by the light, poured out and started toward the water's edge.

"What the devil," said the voice back of the Trapper, "do you fellows mean to leave a boat loose for a man to run against in the dark, when he comes into camp?"

"There is no boat there, captain," said one of the men, speaking up sharply. "The canoes are all hauled up on the beach as you left orders."

"What do you mean," exclaimed the man with another dreadful imprecation, "what do you mean to tell any such stuff as that to me? Don't you suppose I know a boat when I've got my hand on it? If you're drunk I'm not. Come here with a li——"

He never finished the word, for the sound he had started to form ended in a gurgle. The Trapper had not been idle. The shock had not dislodged him, and he knew from whence it came and the cause of it. With a quickness and coolness which had made his name famous, the instant the incoming boat struck, he shoved the end of his own, in which he was sitting, around, describing a half circle; shoved it round steadily, firmly, and quickly, until it was lying side by side with the other, and he himself sitting within arm's reach of the new-comer; and as he called for a light, even when the words were on his lips, the Trapper's hand clutched his throat and the strong fingers settled into the flesh of the neck like the clasp of a vise.

CHAPTER III.

FOR a moment the fingers kept their hold. The man writhed and struck out once or twice wildly with his arms. His paddle, that he had lifted, dropped from his relaxing fingers and fell noisily into the bottom of the boat, and then his body wilted down in a heap; and the Trapper, loosening his grip, pushed the limp form forward that it might not fall into the lake, and then placing the end of his paddle against the body of the man as it lay stretched in the bottom of the boat, he shoved his own out noiselessly into the darkness.

Nor did he act a minute too quick, for the camp-fire kindling suddenly in answer to a piece of pitchy pine that had been flung into it by one of the men, as the captain's call sounded, shot a bright flame suddenly upward, revealing the two boats at the edge of the beach — the one with their captain lying as if dead in the bottom, and the other with the form of the Trapper in the very act of shoving away; and on the instant a rifle ripped its explosion out, and a bullet cut the sleeve of the old Trapper's shirt as his elbows were lifted in the act of pushing off.

"I knowed the vagabond," said the Trapper to himself, as he brought his boat to a stand-still forty rods out in the lake; "yis, I knowed the vagabond the minit I heerd his voice; and I trust the Lord will for-

give me that I didn't pinch him a leetle harder. For his doin's be the doin's of Satan, and it's time that his devilments come to an eend. Ye may hoot and ye may yell," he continued, alluding to the uproar in the camp caused by the gang's discovery of their leader stretched limp and lifeless in the bottom of the boat, "but I advise ye to mix a leetle rubbin' with yer hootin', or ye won't bring him to; for memories got into my fingers as they sot on to his neck, and they tightened the grip a good deal beyend playfulness. I guess I'll paddle in and hear what the vagabonds be sayin'; for a man is apt to let out in his wrath what he's hid in his coolness; and it may be that amid their swearin' I'll git some useful knowledge of what they're up to. And ef there's any more boats runnin' agin me ther'll be somethin' more than pinchin' done; for an honest man can't stand everything ef it be peace time."

So saying the old man paddled in, curving to the right that he might bring his boat beyond the range of the firelight into the shadow of a heavy pine that stood a few yards to the left of the flame. It was a dangerous experiment, and to one of less skill and courage, the attempt would have been hazardous in the extreme; but he was at home in the work he was at, and the training of a lifetime passed amid peril fitted him for the endeavor. In less than two minutes his light boat was again within twenty feet of the beach, and with his rifle resting against his knee and both hammers cocked, the old man again sat in the attitude of listening.

The scene around the fire was a most extraordinary one. The captain of the gang lay stretched on the ground, his head lifted in the lap of one of the men, while the others, kneeling around him, were engaged in chafing his limbs and exercising their rude skill in their attempt to restore him to consciousness. In a few moments they succeeded; for the man struggled to his feet, and drawing his knife, while yet too weak to stand steady, glared into one dark visage after another, with a ferocity of expression frightful to behold. His weakness and ungovernable rage for a moment kept him silent, while his eyes seemed searching for a breast into which to drive his knife. At length, as reason gained its control, he drove the blade into the sheath, while with a voice that actually trembled and choked with passion, he exclaimed, —

"Who are you that allow a man to ambush your camp and strangle your leader within fifty feet of your fire? Have you no eyes nor ears, that on such a job as we have on our hands, and left in charge as I left you, you allow an enemy to bring his boat to the very sands of the beach, while you doze in your camp like boys on a pleasure trip?"

"Easy, easy, captain," said the man who had been the spokesman of the party the night before, when the Trapper paid them a visit, "easy, captain, our eyes and ears may not be as good as yours in the woods, but only one man has come into the camp since we struck this point."

"Where is his body?" shouted the leader. "Were

not your orders to prevent one coming in; or if one came, to prevent his going out?"

"Your orders were all right, captain; but orders are one thing and carrying them out is another. But the man who came in didn't tell us he was coming, and the first that we knew he was standing by the fire here."

"Why didn't you kill him where he stood?" shouted the leader.

"Easily asked and easily answered," replied the man. "The man who stood by the fire had a rifle, while we had nothing but knives; and knives are one thing and a rifle is another, especially if the man who holds it knows how to use it; and I think you will admit, captain, when I tell you his name, that the man who held the rifle knew how to use it."

"What was his name?" yelled the leader.

"*John Norton*," said the man, quietly. And then he added as quietly, "I think I have heard you speak of him."

The look that came to the villain's face as he heard the name was a revelation of the passions which the human countenance, when powerfully excited, can make. As the name was spoken the leader's face blanched till its swarthy skin showed ghastly in the pallor of uncontrollable fear. He stared at the speaker as if he himself were the adequate cause of supreme terror. His jaw dropped, and out of the opened mouth were projected in a hoarse whisper, the words: —

"*John Norton!*"

And then, quick as a flash, as if life depended on the movement, he dashed his foot into the centre of the blazing brands and sent them flying into the air and the camp, which had been lighted by the fire, was, on the instant, buried in darkness.

For a moment not a sound was heard save the sputtering of the scattered brands, as they cooled to extinction where they lay far and near on the ground. For a full minute, not a sound was heard; in the midst of the darkness the six men stood unseen by the Trapper; unseen by each other; and then a voice asked, and the voice sounded cool and steady, —

"Will you allow me to ask, captain, why you extinguished that fire?"

"FOOLS!" was the answer, "*fools*, every one of you! Do you not know that a rifle whose bullet never yet missed its mark, covered us from the darkness as we stood by that fire? What devil of ill-luck was it that directed me to this lake, and threw us into the power of a man, whom, of all men living, I dread most to meet, especially when on an errand like this and with such a job as we have on our hands, cumbered with that cursed tent and what is within it! Ay, ay, now I know whose boat lay against that beach and whose fingers gripped my throat; it was John Norton's boat and John Norton's hand;" and again the man muttered, — and he swore a dreadful oath as he muttered it, —

"What devil of ill-luck brought me to this lake!"

Again there was a pause. After a minute or two, the same cool and steady voice said,—

"I'll confess, captain, that we who make up this crowd don't know much about your Indian tricks and this prowling about in the night like a panther, but I know we are seven, all told, and there is only one man against us, — and if that one man stands in the way, I think we had better wipe him out."

"Come this way," said the leader, "and I'll tell you what our danger is, and the only way to escape it." And he moved through the darkness to where the shanty stood, followed by the others, and the six seated themselves in the darkness at the front of the lodge. And thus seated they held their murderous council.

It is said that darkness is the shelter of guilt. May it not with equal truth be said that it is the friend and ally of innocence? At least it was this at this juncture, for no sooner had the renegade extinguished the fire than the Trapper, without an instant's hesitation, had run his boat against the beach, and leaving it, moved with a quick step across the sand, and with the swiftness of a man moving in broad daylight, passed from tree to tree, until he had come within a hundred feet of the shanty, and then dropping to his knees, had begun to work himself toward the group. Fortunately for him, Nature assisted his efforts; for a puff of wind, such as occasionally moves unattended by any current through the calm stillness of the woods, starting high up the mountain-side, moved suddenly downward

toward the lake, swaying the pine-tops and rustling their tassels noisily.

The Trapper was not slow to take advantage of so helpful an incident, for under cover of the noise overhead he crept yet nigher and nigher to the group, until he was within forty feet of the six men, as they sat in the gloom.

"Sh!" whispered the leader of the gang, "did you hear a noise?" And then he added, "Curse the wind! If John Norton was in the woods, and not in his boat, he would crawl within twenty feet of us under cover of that noise."

Again another puff came down the mountain-side, and passed merrily through the pine trees under which they were sitting, and under cover of it again the Trapper crept nearer. When he stopped this time, and lay at full length, hidden in the darkness, he was within arm's length of the leader himself, as he sat crouched on the end of the log that made the front frame-work of the lodge.

It was perilous. In cooler moments the Trapper himself would have called it foolhardy; but the old man, who for years had done no such work as this, thrilled in every drop of his blood with the daring of the enterprise. Nor was his confidence in himself exaggerated or his movement without the support of careful calculation, for he knew that with the exception of the leader himself, there was not one in the gang whose senses were trained to such a degree that they could detect an ambush such as he, with his skill and his courage, was making.

"You said," at last spoke the leader, "that the way for us to do was to wipe the man out, and that it was seven against one; but the man whom you propose to wipe out is one among a thousand. I have seen him" — and the man ground his teeth as he said it — "I have seen him in the fight and on the trail; and in a fight he is a devil, and on the trail his movements are as noiseless as a snake's."

"Who is this John Norton, anyway?" interrogated a voice.

"I know not who he is," responded the leader; "I know only that his strength is that of a giant, that in battle he is without fear, and that his bullet is death. When I was but a boy in the tent of my father I heard his name spoken by the chiefs, — spoken in a whisper, as men speak a name of terror. When I was in the far West, ten years ago, the Indians of the Plains had his name, and they, too, spoke it in whispers, as did the chiefs of the North. And wherever I heard his name they told me the same story" —

"What was the story they told you, captain?"

"The story of a man who was never beaten in battle, never met his match in strength, never outwitted by cunning, never driven from his purpose, — a man whose knife is certain and whose bullet is sure. Such was the story they told me; and little did I think, when I heard of him as a boy, or when, years later, I heard of him on the Plains, that I should ever meet him in battle, or bear his marks on my body, curse him!"

"Then you had a set-to with the old fellow, did you?"

interrogated the voice. "Tell us all about it, captain. Where was it, and how did it come about?"

For several moments there was no response, and then the leader said, —

"It's five years ago, and in the Company's country, that I met him. I was ranging with a band I had picked up, and we had pretty much our own way, for we were a dozen in all, and we hadn't many scruples about whose skins we took, nor whose money, for that matter. We didn't set many traps that fall, but we made a good gathering of furs, nevertheless. We ran across a line one day set with unusual skill, and we cleaned it out and camped on it at night. The next morning at dawn a man walked into our midst, and, putting his foot on the pack of green skins, said the skins were his, and wished to know if any of us wanted to take them. We were eight in all, and we weren't used to that kind of talk, and we went for him."

The leader had told his story so far with a voice that gathered earnestness as he proceeded, and when he had reached the words, "We went for him!" from the remembrance of a scene that stirred his passions, it actually trembled.

"What happened then?" asked the quiet voice out of the darkness.

"The two that jumped first fell dead at his feet, with a bullet hole in each head," answered the man, "and then he was among us. No matter about the fight," said the leader, "it went against us; that's enough."

"Went against you?" asked the voice. "I thought

you were eight against one, and armed, and used to having your own way. How could it go against you?"

"The devil knows, I don't," answered the leader surlily. "I know that we were well armed and used to combat, and that we did our best, and that only two came out of that fight alive, — the man that claimed the skins and myself, — and nothing saved me but an accident; the merest twig that turned the bullet from its course, enough to save my life, and barely enough, for it ploughed across my breast deep as the bone."

"And the man who claimed the skins, captain, was John Norton?"

"Yes, the name leapt out of his mouth in the midst of the fight, and I've often thought that it helped him win the fight, for we had come through from the plains, and his name terrified the boys; but it didn't terrify me," continued the renegade, "for I never saw a man yet I was afraid to meet in equal battle, and I had always sworn that if I ever met John Norton I would kill him; and when his name broke out of his mouth, and I knew that my chance had come, I drawed on him, standing not ten feet away."

"Did your gun miss fire, captain?" asked the voice.

"No, my gun did not miss fire," was the answer.

"How did he escape, then?" asked the voice excitedly.

"He saw me drawing on him," said the leader, "though how, I know not, for three men were at him with their knives; but see me he did, and with a motion quick as lightning he snatched one of them

from the ground, and flung him through the air, as if he had been but a dog; flung him upon the very muzzle of my rifle, and I shot my own companion instead of him."

"You didn't give the matter up there, did you, captain?"

"No, I did not," exclaimed the leader with an awful oath. "I went and gathered another band, twenty in all, and we struck his camp the very morning he had left it. His trail led southward, and we followed it, and the next day at noon we came upon him heavily loaded with his traps and with his skins, and for four days we had a running fight."

"I should think you might have killed him."

"That's because you don't know the man," answered the leader. "Kill him! That man for four days played with us, and at the end of the fourth day only six of the twenty were on his trail. My left arm was bandaged where his bullet had passed through, and in three other spots had his lead touched me, drawing blood."

"Did you give up then?" asked the voice.

"Give up! Does a man of my cross leave the trail of the man who has beaten him twice, and whose bullets have four times scarred his body? I followed him for a month after I had sent the others back, and before I left his trail I had been in his tent, and he was asleep, and my knife was with me; but an accident saved him from my knife even as an accident had saved me from his bullet.

"Yes, as you say, he must be wiped out, for if by any accident of any devil's luck such as brought us to this lake, a detective should run against him, we would have to fight for it; and I would sooner fight a dozen of the best officers that were ever sent against us than this one man. For he knows no fear, and he knows everything else that a life spent in woodcraft and war can teach him."

"Look here," asked one of the men, "why not move the camp farther on?"

"Move the camp farther on!" exclaimed the leader, "what good would that do? There isn't a lake nor a creek in these woods that John Norton don't know. You can hide in cities, for the pavement leaves no trail and multitudes make concealment; but no one can hide in these woods so that his eye won't find him out, nor can you move either by land or water that he won't detect your trail."

"Surely," said the voice in reply, "surely, captain, with your blood and your training you ought to be a match in what you call woodcraft, of any man living."

"My father was a chief," answered the renegade, and his voice sounded haughtily as he answered, "my father was a chief, and I can make my moccasins as light as the air, and my paddle moves like the fin of a fish. John Norton himself knows that in all the north country there is not a lighter foot nor a quicker eye than mine. For I have been in his camp myself, as I said, and, but for his cursed dogs, my knife would have been in his breast."

"Very well," said the man answering back through the darkness, "if you have been in his camp once, you can go into it again; and if the dogs stand in the way, why then, dogs are hungry, and dogs will eat. We will poison the dogs."

Was it the result of rage kindled to a flame at the dastard suggestion; or was it the result of one of those swift intuitions which, while it seemed the height of rashness, was coolest calculation, making for himself, when in danger, a quick and sure way out of it which had made the Trapper's name synonymous with daring and success? Whatever was the cause, the words had scarcely left the lips of the speaker, before a man's fist smote him on the head, and he tumbled from the log on which he was sitting, into the very lap of the leader, and then, as the five men leaped to their feet, and as many pistols flashed in the darkness, their ears caught the sound of hurrying feet scurrying through the gloom, and the next instant they caught the splash of a boat launched hastily from the beach and heard the muttered words: —

"Pizen the pups, will ye, ye vagabonds!"

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH the darkness the old Trapper paddled toward his camp. He checked the onward course of his boat, as if canvassing in his own mind the advisability of returning in order to investigate still further the character of his enemies, and the object of their encampment, but each time his judgment ruled against his impulse, and he continued his course toward his cabin. We say his enemies, for as such it was evident that henceforth the men in the camp on the Point were to be regarded. And enemies of such a sort, too, that little delay could be expected in their efforts for his destruction.

"No, no," said the Trapper to himself, thinking — as was his custom when alone — aloud, "no, no, it would be downright foolishness for a man to put his moccasin on that beach ag'in to-night, arter what has passed; for the vagabonds be in arnest in their deviltry, and I have larnt them the value of watchfulness that they won't forgit while they stay in the woods. It maybe that I acted a leetle hasty — yis, I do conceit I acted onrational in cuffin' that chap as I did, for it broke up the council, and the Lord only knows what I might have heerd of their evil doin' ef I'd acted with better jedgment, and let their loose talkin' gone on. But I was pritty nigh 'em, for sartin, and ef they'd

begun to walk around careless-like, they'd stumbled over me — leastwise, it's reasonable to think so — and then there would have been a good deal of liveliness goin' on around that P'int; and in sech a case somethin' would sartinly have happened, and then," — and here the old Trapper intermitted a couple of strokes, and trailed his paddle for a moment, as if communing with his innermost self.

"Yis, yis," he resumed, "I've consorted with the old dog nigh on to fourteen year, and he saved me from the knife of the vagabond, there, as the villain said, not to speak of other like sarvices he's done me, off and on, actin' accordin' to his gifts. Sport is the dyin' gift of the Lad, and I remember well when he gin me the dog, and it's onreasonable to think that a man who loves the pups could lie within arm's reach of a man and hear him talk of pizenin' 'em — which is downright murder as I conceit — and not larn him a leetle caution in speakin' of the Lord's creeturs. Yes, I'm glad I cuffed him as I did, for the vagabond lacks manners, and it's an actaal marcy to edicate sech ignorance. And ef the Lord gives a man a chance to do sech an act, it's downright sin not to improve the opportunity, as the missioners say, as I conceit."

Thus communing with his own thoughts the Trapper held on his course, paddling slowly through the darkness toward his camp. At last he reached the northern end of the lake and moved into the little bay in front of the grove of maples in which his cabin stood. Nor did he land at once, but twice he skirted the shore

noiselessly, and when he landed he ran his boat against the shore with the utmost caution. "For," he said to himself, "there's no telling how many of the vagabonds there be, nor where they be, and it won't do in war-time, when enemies are around, to run into yer own camp careless-like." It was not until with noiseless foot he had reached the door of his cabin, and heard the welcoming whine of the hounds, who had scented him, that he ventured to enter.

"Ye be good and sensible, pups," said the old man to the dogs, as he lighted a candle, made from the tallow of a buck, with his own hands; "yis, ye be knowin' and faithful accordin' to yer gifts, and a man can sleep in peace with yer muzzles on the threshold. Many be the time, Rover, that yer father, and yer gran'ther afore ye, gave me warnin' when inimies were 'round me seekin' my life; and ye, yerself, saved me from the murderin' knife of the vagabond on the P'int there, as the villain himself said. The Lord may sartinly hold jedgment agin me ef I ever ag'in range my eyes through the sights ef he be within decent distance, and I don't bring his deviltry to an eend."

Here the old man paused, and removing the caps from the tubes of his rifle wiped them with a buckskin rag, until all moisture was removed, and then, recapping them, he called the dogs from their resting spot to his side, and said, —

"Pups, there be inimies 'round; do you hear, Rover, there be inimies 'round, and, for aught I know, the vagabonds may be outlyin' about the cabin

afore mornin';" and here the old man fingered the locks of his rifle significantly, and pointed toward the open door, while the hounds pricked up their ears and scented the air with lifted muzzles. "Ay, ay, I see ye understand," continued the Trapper, "and I must sleep and ye must wake to-night. Here, pups, come here and make yer bed by the door, and do ye give me warnin' ef ye scent man or beast afore dawn. And do ye remember, Rover," and the Trapper patted the old hound's head, "that yer master sleeps with nothin' but yer nose and yer senses atween him and danger." So saying, the Trapper motioned the dogs to their bed, where they crouched with their muzzles actually resting on the doorsill, while he, throwing some skins on to the floor behind them, with his rifle by his side and his hand resting on the stock, lay down to sleep, knowing that between him and any enmity of men, lay two faithful sentinels who would keep certain watch until the morning should dawn.

The light of early morning was just beginning to redden in the east when the Trapper woke from his slumber. He rose at once from the skins on which he had been sleeping, and, speaking pleasantly to the dogs who still lay stretched side by side as he had placed them hours before, he passed out of the door and ranged his eyes up the lake. Then, calling the hounds to his side, he sent them by a motion of his hand and a word of prompting, circling around the cabin as if in search of game. In a moment the dogs returned, having given no cry, and stood wagging their tails in front of him.

"All right, pups! all right!" exclaimed the Trapper. "I know what ye mean; for ye tell me as plain as words of truth could speak it that foot of man has not touched the shore to-night. Do ye stay where ye be till the meat is ready, and do ye keep yer eyes on the water and your noses toward the bush, for I mistrust the vagabonds, and when they come they must find John Norton waitin' for 'em. Ef fightin' comes in downright arnest," muttered the old man, as he entered the cabin to prepare the meal, "I sartinly wish the boy was here, for his eye is keen and his finger quick; and his piece is a good un, and eight to one is big odds."

The meal was soon prepared, and, moving the table through the doorway, the old Trapper proceeded to eat it with evident relish. The hounds kept their station, while their vigilant eyes and active muzzles bore evidence that even the smell and sight of food could not cause them to forget their master's commands. The sun was already risen, and the fog that heavily swathed the level lake began to roll itself southward, as moved by the rising current of air, resembling nothing so much as gigantic rolls of carded wool, whose tapering ends touched either shore. Before the meal was ended the surface of the lake, lively with ripples, lay plain to view. The old Trapper was cleaning his plate with the last morsel of bread, preliminary to eating it, when a low growl from both of the hounds simultaneously sounded their warning.

"Ay, ay, pups," answered the Trapper; "I see

what ye see. It's one of the vagabonds for sartin ; for, far off as it is, I can see it's a canoe, and paddled by a man who uses his paddle as ef it was a Dutchwoman's washin'-board. Don't git oneasy, pups, for he's a good mile away yit, and ef he don't git the swing of the ash better than he's got it yit, it'll take him a good hour to cover the distance, onless he quits the canoe and takes to swimmin'. So, pups, come here and take yer breakfast like rational dogs, as ye be, and never mind the canoe. For there's plenty of time, and many a fight and many a race by man and dog alike is won at the table. For a full stomach at the table makes a stout heart in the scrimmage."

So saying, the Trapper proceeded to feed the hounds bountifully, which having done, he cleared away the dishes and carried the table back into the cabin.

By this time the canoe was within a quarter of a mile of the beach, and the Trapper, with his rifle in the hollow of his arm, walked leisurely down to the bank and waited the approach of the canoe, which, with the awkward motion of a novice, was being lumberingly pushed along. It needed but a glance on the part of the Trapper to reveal the fact that the man in the canoe was the same who had been the spokesman of the party on the night of his first call at the camp on the Point, and whose coolness had extorted the old man's admiration.

From the elevation on which the Trapper stood he could easily command not merely a full view of the person of the paddler from head to foot, but the bottom

of the canoe, also, from stem to stern; and it was patent at a glance that the man was totally unarmed, and the boat empty of weapons, save in the belt of the paddler was a knife, and on the bow of the canoe, where it was decked over, was a pair of long-barrelled duelling pistols.

When some fifty rods from the shore the paddler checked his boat, and, taking a white handkerchief from his pocket, waved it over his head.

"Ay, ay," called the Trapper, in answer to the signal; "I know the language of yer sign, and many be the times I've seed it waved when smoke was thick and bodies of men covered the ground. Yis, yis, hist yer craft along ef ye can, or I shall have to come out and tow ye in."

Thus encouraged, the boatman renewed his efforts, and, by dint of great exertion, soon brought it within forty yards of the beach, when he again checked his efforts, and for a full moment inspected the Trapper. The Trapper returned the inquisition of the stranger, and it is safe to say that there was little about the other that either of them didn't see.

The stranger was of medium size, and dressed in a manner which divided his garments equally between the fashion of the woods and the city. His moccasins were almost snow-white, and gayly ornamented with beads of many colors. His pantaloons were of checked cassimere, of sober shade, and as clean and unseamed as if just from the hands of a tailor. His belt was of the color of his moccasins, and as gayly ornamented. The

handle of his knife was of solid pearl. His white shirt — for he wore neither vest nor coat — was immaculately clean, and from the centre of its ruffled front blazed a magnificent diamond. On the little finger of his left hand, as it rested carelessly on the paddle shaft, glowed with equal splendor a companion gem. The hands themselves were white, and, for a man's, exceedingly delicate. His face, in the clean-cut outline of the dominant features, was positively classical; and, as it was clean-shaven, save as to the mustache, it showed to great advantage against the background of long, wavy, jet-black hair that fell in a curling mass even to his shoulders. His lips were full and curved like a girl's. His nose straight as a Greek's, the nostrils thin. His eyes a keen, steely gray.

"Good-morning, old man," said the stranger, breaking the silence at last, and as he spoke his lips parted pleasantly, and the teeth showed snow-white behind the smiling lines. "I've come down to make you a call, and have a little fun with you, if you feel good-natured enough to grant me an interview. Then there's something I want to talk over with you about the camp on the Point, so there needn't be any misunderstanding about matters. Can I come ashore, old man?"

"Yis," answered the old man, "ye can come in, but afore ye come in it's best we understand each other; for ef ye expect to come any of yer leetle pranks on an old man whose eye and ear and finger, for that matter, larnt their tricks on the trail and in the scrimmage, I might as well tell ye, young man, that ye'll come in a

good deal livelier than ye'll go out; for I've stood about all the sass I shall from ye chaps on the P'int. And ef ye poke me up any more, somethin' will happen. Yis, ye can come in, and ef ye act square ye can go out, but ef ye try to play any nasty trick on me, or even git sassy-like with yer tongue, why then some of yer comrades in yer deviltry will have to come and fetch ye out. Ye understand the tarms now, and ef ye like the conditions ye can paddle in and welcome; but let me say that any leetle motions ye might make toward them pistils there, in passin', would send ye into etarnity afore yer finger could tech a trigger. For I've a piece that works quick, and my muzzle always covers onsartain game when I go into a thicket."

"Oh, that's all right," said the man pleasantly. "If you and I ever fight, we'll fight on an even deal. I didn't come to fight, John Norton, and if I had, I'd shuffle fair. I bet on luck and go my pile on the fickle jade. If she favors and I win, I laugh; if she frowns and I lose, I laugh as gayly. She's favored me thus far, and I shall trust her to the end of the game. When the game ends is pure luck also. How's that for doctrine, John Norton?" and so saying the gambler stepped ashore, and, climbing the bank, stopped in front of the old Trapper, while he busied himself in brushing the sand from his gayly wrought moccasins.

"It's the devil's own doctrine, young man," answered the Trapper. "A man dies when he dies, by the Lord's app'intment, for he has numbered the hairs of our heads, and the length of our days, be they few or many, be

writ in his Book. It's not by luck that I have passed through the dangers of sixty year, spent on the trail and the deadly scrimmage, or that my hairs be whitenin' in peace, but because the hour that the Lord has fixed for me to stand in the Great Clearin' has not yit come, and the eend of my trail is not yit reached. That's my doctrine, young man, and it's good in Scriptur' and reason both, as I conceit."

"It may be as you say, touching yourself, John Norton," answered the gambler, "but I belong to another generation, and see things differently. The Book you put faith in I don't care a deuce for, and luck is better than reason, when the wheel goes round, and the coin is plenty. Scripture and reason ain't mentioned in the rules of the game I play, and in my business luck governs the points." And the man laughed lightly and even merrily, as he spoke.

"What be your business?" asked the Trapper.

"I amuse people," answered the man, "and take the conceit out of fools." And again he laughed pleasantly.

"I don't understand ye," replied the Trapper, "and ag'in I ax ye what be yer business, and how do ye amuse people?"

"With these!" And the man whipped a pack of cards from his pocket and shuffled them carelessly, "with these I amuse people and take the conceit out of fools."

"Ye be a gambler," exclaimed the Trapper, "and ye be the devil's own child!"

"I shouldn't wonder," replied the man, "if I was.

The relationships in genteel society are a good deal mixed, and it's a wise son that knows his own father. You don't play, old man?" The fellow put the interrogation with the coolness of long habit.

"The Lord forbid!" answered the Trapper, "I never tetched a keerd in my life, nor do I know the picturs one from another." And the look of abhorrence and contempt on his rugged features gave supreme emphasis to the assertion.

"I'm sorry," replied the gambler — and for the first time since he landed, his face took a sober expression, — "I swear by the aces and the bowers, I'm sorry, for if you even knew the value of the cards we could have settled the matter between us without further trouble."

"What matter do you mean?" queried the Trapper. "I've had no traffic with ye, and there's nothin' to settle."

"Yes, there is something between us," coolly answered the gambler, "and something mighty serious, too, and something that's got to be settled pleasantly before I leave this beach, or it will be settled unpleasantly after I leave it." And the man paused and looked at the Trapper significantly.

"Ye sartinly know a good deal more than I do," answered the Trapper, "and as I never say anything onless I have something to say, ye'd better speak fust."

"Very well," replied the gambler, "I don't know much about the game I'm playing, but it's always safe to lead an ace; so here goes. The matter I came to speak to you about, and to arrange if possible, is the

camp on the Point. There it is, old man, on the board; cover it."

"Sartin," answered the Trapper, "I don't quite ketch the meanin' of your gambler's talk, but I'll settle that business on the P'int there in about a week, as the signs now p'int."

"What do you propose to do?" asked the gambler coolly.

"I conceit I shall know what's inside the big tent in about a week," answered the Trapper as coolly; "but a day more or less, when yer arter game of that size, don't matter, and I shan't be perticerler."

"You will be more likely to know what's in heaven," laughingly replied the gambler. "No, no, old man, I told the captain when I got up this morning that it wasn't a fair game. The cards are stocked, and we hold the whole pack — seven to one! It's no fair. There's no chance for luck; it is nothing short of murder, and I told the captain to his face, that I wouldn't see a man wiped out in that style. And so I came down to see if we couldn't sort of ante up, and get out of it without any unpleasantness."

The gambler was unmistakably in earnest, that the old Trapper could see. To him the death of the Trapper seemed a foregone conclusion. He knew the character of the crowd to which he belonged, and the deadliness of their purpose. He knew the skill and murderous energy with which they would launch themselves against the man in whom they all recognized a common enemy. It was certainly evident that how-

ever debasing the practice of his profession might be, the gambler recognized the code, and was exerting himself to the full extent of his power to avoid what seemed to him not battle but murder. The motive which had prompted him to this visit was honorable, and the old man was not slow to see that underneath the surface of reckless wickedness there still survived those honorable instincts which make the civilized man to differ from the barbarian.

"I am much obleeged to ye," answered the Trapper, "for though yer arrand be foolish, yit yer motive was a good un; but ye needn't worry about me. I know the man I have to deal with on the P'int, and there's a leetle outstandin' account atween us that orter be settled; and as for the odds, it's enough to make the issue onsartin; and that's all there is to say about it. Ef it be the Lord's will that I meet my eend this week and on this lake, he'll find John Norton ready when he calls. But there's deviltry on that P'int, and I'll find it out."

"Egad, old man, I must say that I like the way you hold your cards, and though I know it would be against luck, and we would be bound to lose, yet I swear, if I wasn't dealing for the other side I'd assist, myself; but as it is, you've got to play it alone, and I tell you the cards are against you, for I made the deal; and now for God's sake let us settle this thing peaceably. I have heard of your fame, and I never heard but one thing of you; and now that I look upon you, and see your white head — well, damn it, it almost makes a

fool of me, and the game can't be played out. I told the captain that it couldn't be played out, but if I go back without an arrangement, it *will* be played out; so don't shake your head, but let me make a proposition."

"I said, young man," answered the Trapper, "that ye was the devil's own child, and I don't say that I will change my idees of ye; but I will say that ef ye be the devil's own child ye've got a good broad streak of righteousness in ye somewhere. But it's mighty resky the way yer goin' on, for ye be in a mighty bad set."

"Look here, old man," answered the gambler, "you listen: Now you understand that I shall play this thing through unless you settle; but don't think that I don't know that I am playing with mighty dirty cards. I didn't choose the pack. You see I didn't start the thing. A friend of mine had it in hand. He had done me a good turn once — a little matter where pistols and a morning ride came in. He is a little careless, — careless footed, you know, and coming out of a house in Quebec, one night, he stumbled. There happened to be a knife at the bottom of the steps, and the knife accidentally went through him. He killed the fellow, and staggered to my lodgings before he started the knife. The doctor said he would live, but the upshot of it was that I had to take his cards; that's the way I got into this little matter, and that's why, old man, I've got to play the game through. If it was mine, I would throw it up. So I've come down here to make you a proposition."

"Ye can say what ye've got to say," answered the Trapper. "Ye can say what ye've got to say, young man, but I don't conceit that the signs p'int towards peace, for there is a right and a wrong about it, and that makes bargainin' out of the question, as I jedge."

"I tell you what I will do," responded the gambler; "I'll draw with you for it," and as he spoke he shuffled all the face cards out of the pack on to the ground; "you don't understand the value of the pictures, but you do know that two is more than one, and ten more than five. I make this proposition: the highest number wins. If you draw higher than I, you shall not be disturbed; if I draw higher than you, you shan't disturb us. Come, how do you like it?"

"I don't do things that way," answered the Trapper. "When I *draw*, as ye call it, it will be in a different fashion."

For a moment the gambler stood perplexed, and an expression almost of pain crossed his handsome features, and the customary nonchalance of his manner sobered into gravity, and then he said, —

"Old man, the game has got to stop; it's all one-sided, and it is simply murder. I will give you a second plan, and, for God's sake, don't say nay to it. There is a man about your age down on the coast, — he and I have not had much to do with each other for some years. You see, we had a little conversation one evening, and I left that night. I have not seen him since. He's about your age; your head makes me think of him. There is a slight relationship between

us; they call it father, I think. Well, no matter about that; I want to stop this thing right here, and this is what I propose: You see those pistols — they are favorites of mine. I say, plainly, that there is but one man in the world to whom I cannot give odds and win. I know your skill, and the piece that lies in your arm is, I suppose, your favorite. I tell you what we will do. If you won't draw for it, we will shoot for it. Any way so that the cards shan't be packed, old man, — any way so that the cards shan't be packed;" and then the man, after a moment's pause, said, "Will you shoot for it?"

"What's the match?" asked the Trapper.

"Do you mean what's the prize?" interrogated the gambler.

"Sartin, sartin," answered the Trapper, "a man don't want to barn powder for nothin', not to speak of the caps and the lead, though the caps be plenty and the boy sends in lead by the ton."

"The prize is this," answered the gambler, "we will shoot three shots; if I win, you are to let the camp alone; if you win, the game goes on, — if you choose. What say you to that?"

"The matter of shootin'," answered the Trapper, "is a kind of pleasant divarsion to a man of my gifts at this time of the year, when the bucks be lean, the does be with fawn, and the fur loose in the skin. And ef ye want a leetle playfulness, why the air be clear and the light jest about right; and as for yer pistol shootin', Henry has told me a good deal, off and on,

about the tricks that the perfessors have, and, it may be, ye can show an old man some new devices, and a surer way to drive lead than he has larnt in sixty year of practice with the weepon. Yis, ye name yer targets, and we'll shoot the three shots, and ef ye beat me at the shootin' I'll take the pups and start for the Saranac, afore ye can paddle yer canoe to yer camp; for the boy is comin' in soon, and the Lord knows I wouldn't have him see the man that beat me in shootin' when I was usin' the lead and the powder and the caps he has sent me. Yis, I'll accept the tarms."

The angel that keeps the book in which the emotions of human hearts are recorded, will surely remember in the hour of his deepest need the flush of satisfaction that lighted the pale face of the gambler, and the joy which leapt to his heart as the old man, whose whitened head had reminded him of his distant and deserted father, closed with his propositions. He turned toward his canoe with a foot swift and light as a boy's, when buoyant with happiness; for, knowing his own almost matchless skill, he felt confident of winning the match and thus saving from murderous violence the old man to whom his heart had, as he conversed with him, more and more strongly gone out. With a fine touch of chivalry, which the Trapper was not slow to notice, the gambler left one pistol in the boat, and, returning, with equal chivalry proposed to shoot the first shot himself.

"Ye needn't think I mistrust ye, boy, for I don't," said the Trapper. "But it may be the thought of my

faith in ye will make yer narves steadier in the trial, — make it seem more like a leetle playfulness atween us, and not a matter of life and death, as it's pretty sartin to be, so pick out yer target and show us the natur of yer gifts. Lord-a-massy, ef the boy was here, what fun we three might have!"

"This is the first trial," said the man. "You see two cones on that pine, — the two that stand tipping the third branch from the water. I will take the lower. If it is left you can take it," said the gambler laughingly; "if not, the other," and as the last word sounded, his pistol cracked sharp and quick, and the little cone, no larger than a marble, disappeared.

"Ye did it well," said the Trapper. "I've picked that tree nearly clean myself; — but I will take the one ye left," and the vibrations of the last word were lost in the ring of the piece as he discharged it.

The gambler looked at the twig, now bare, then he looked at the Trapper, and said, —

"Honors are easy, old man," and he laughed like a boy; but through the laughter quivered a vibration of graver quality, almost of pain.

In a moment each of the two men had reloaded his weapon; and the Trapper said, —

"What next, friend?"

"*This!*" answered the gambler, and walking off some twenty paces, he put a deuce of spades against a stump, and returning, he said, "I take the lower," and again his pistol cracked quick as a thought.

"And I take the upper," said the Trapper, and his

bullet drove through the upper spot, as the gambler's had through the lower.

Again they recharged their pieces.

"What next?" asked the Trapper. "There is only one more bullet, and it isn't sartin whether I go to the Saranac or to the P'int."

"Say, rather, old man, that it is not certain whether you go to the Saranac or to your death," almost solemnly reiterated the gambler.

"The Lord beyend doubt knows," answered the Trapper; "but the shootin' may help him decide."

But the humor of the Trapper started no answering smile on the countenance of the gambler. He said not a word, but took two glass balls, brightly gilded, from his pocket, and giving one to the Trapper, he said, —

"A flying shot. I never missed but once." And steadying himself for a moment, he breathed his breath from his chest and tossed the shining globe high into the air. Up, up it went; another second and it would reach the apex of its upward flight, at which point the Trapper knew full well the gambler had calculated to take it. Was it fate, was it Providence, was it the gambler's "luck," that even at the instant when it came to the point of its highest flight, a puff of wind caught it suddenly, and blew it outward as if it were a feather, and the bullet from the gambler's pistol missed it by its width?

But another bullet did not miss it, for scarcely had the pistol cracked before the Trapper jumped his rifle

to his cheek, and as the wind swept the shining globe out over the lake, his bullet caught it as it flew, and the globe burst into gilded fragments.

"*The game goes on*," said the gambler, and he turned carelessly toward the canoe; but his face was white in its excitement, though not a muscle moved. He had nearly reached the canoe when he turned, and, stepping quickly back in front of the Trapper, he said, —

"Look here, old man, the game will go against you; for the cards are stocked and you stand no chance. I thought to stop the play and save your life; but for the first time in years luck has turned against me, and when we meet again we meet as enemies. Still, I like the way you hold your cards; and though you play a lone hand — one against seven — still luck may pull you through, so not knowing how 'twill end, we'll part man style. Your heart is right, your eye sure, and your finger quick, and though I'm in for it, and shall play the game through and kill you if I can, yet, in my heart, old white-head, I trust to God you'll win, and there's Dick Raymond's hand upon it."

"And there's my hand, young man," answered the Trapper promptly. "Ye've come on a fool's arrand, but yer mo*tive* was right, and though I honestly think the devil will have ye, yit it may be the Lord of marcy will give ye a chance in the jedgment — leastwise, I'll put a word or two in for ye when yer case comes up for hearin'."

"All right," answered the gambler, as he turned

away, laughing in his own light, reckless fashion, "small change is good when you can't get bills. There'll be enough to testify the other way." And entering his canoe he pushed it out upon the lake and paddled the best he might toward the Point.

CHAPTER V.

FOR a moment the old Trapper stood watching the gambler as he paddled away; and as he gazed after the departing boat his face settled into gravity, and he said, —

"The ball will open in short order, now, for sartin; and I shouldn't wonder ef the vagabonds started off with a jig. Lord! won't there be a howlin' on that P'int when that canoe gets in and the boy has had a chance to tell 'em the result of his arrand! I'm sorry for him. Yis, I'm sorry that he and me will have to pull triggers agin each other, for he's young yit, and ought, in reason, to make a long life of it; and though he's got a good deal of a cant in the wrong direction, still it's not by any means settled, as I conceit, to which place he goes arter death, and his shootin' is sartinly in his favor. He's acted like a man and not like a vagabond in this business, anyway," continued the Trapper, after a pause, "and I'll remember it to his credit ef I ever line the sights on him. Ah me! I've seed blood enough, and hoped to eend my days in peace, as a man should whose head is whitenin'; but the vagabonds on the P'int be onreasonable and the devil'll be to pay afore another mornin'."

The scene on the Point was in truth very like what the Trapper had predicted when the gambler had told

the renegades the result of his mission. The behavior of the vulgar ruffians and of the gambler was respectively characteristic. His going had been in the face of their wishes; indeed, in spite of their threats, — for they felt that he would be successful in his mission, and that the man for whose blood they thirsted would escape them. For, that one man should set himself in opposition to and defy the utmost endeavors of seven, bent on his destruction, after he had been forewarned, and a chance of escape given him, seemed to them incredible. Even the half-breed, who was "captain" of the gang, — although the gambler had in fact the ultimate authority, especially having been intrusted by his friend with the care of the secret of the tent, — knowing as he did, and had ample cause of knowing, the determined character of the Trapper, had not the shadow of doubt in his mind but that the old man, when warned by the gambler of the formidable forces arrayed against him, would conclude that resistance would be hopeless, and that ordinary prudence required that he should forego his determination to discover the mystery of the tent, and remain quiescent, even if he did not decamp altogether.

When, therefore, the gambler, at rising, had told the wretches that "the game must stop," and that he was going down to call on the Trapper and "settle the little business quietly," his announcement had called down upon him the curses of the entire gang. Indeed, nothing but the supreme coolness of the man who trusted to "luck," and his quiet remark as he took the duel-

ling pistols from their case, "that if any of them wanted to take a quiet hand with him, they might measure off ten paces on the beach and see who held the cards for this little game," had prevented them from resisting by force his departure on his errand of peace. Knowing, as they supposed they did, what would be the upshot of the matter, and not doubting but that the gambler had brought back the Trapper's pledge that he would leave the lake or at least forego his effort to discover the secret of the tent and thwart them in their wickedness, his return created no excitement.

Not doubting the result of the gambler's visit, they remained seated in sullen silence around the remnants of the breakfast they had been eating. Not until the young man had landed and actually joined their circle and begun to break his own fast on the fragments of the food that remained, did they even notice his coming. At length the half-breed, who had been puffing huge rolls of smoke from his vicious-looking mouth, fastened his glowing eyes on the gambler's face, and with a voice whose tone, in spite of his assumed indifference, trembled with hatred, said, —

"Well, what's the result?"

The gambler finished chewing the piece of meat he had placed in his mouth, and when he had swallowed it, answered in his quietest tone:

"*The game goes on.*"

Had a bolt from the sky overhead, descended in their midst, the astonishment of the villains could not have

been greater. For an instant the astonishment kept them silent, and then a yell leaped from their throats so strong, so fierce, so wickedly joyful, that it might have been poured from the throats of those who are said to be only happy when a human soul falls suddenly into their power. Up rose the devilish yell, sharp, quick, terrible, and then silence.

"By God, he's a dead man!" shouted the half-breed, and as he spoke he clinched the hand that held the pipe and shook it fiercely over his head, while the pipe shivered and fell in fragments over his person.

For a moment the gambler said not a word. He continued eating with a face in which not a muscle tightened. He lifted a cup of warm coffee to his lips and sipped it quietly, then carelessly asked, —

"When do you deal the cards?"

"To-night!" answered the half-breed. "To-night, the old cuss shall die. Twice have his bullets drawn my blood. Twice has he killed my friends. To-night my knife shall be in his heart." And the look on the half-breed's face was the look of a devil.

For a moment, again, there was a pause; then the gambler said, —

"Shall I assist, or will you fellows play it alone?"

"No, damn you," answered the half-breed, "you shan't assist. You've done your best to cheat me of my revenge; you shall stay here. My men and I will wipe him out ourselves. I've sworn by the bones that lie buried in the north to kill him; and John Norton dies to-night — dies with my knife in his chest and my

face close to his eyes." And as he spoke the villain drew his knife and brandished it wildly over his head.

"Look here, you dirty dog," said the gambler, and as he spoke he rose to his feet, "once before on this trip you've forgotten your manners — if you ever had any — and while I'm in this thing to serve a friend who served me once, and shall play it through to the last card, still, I want you and your gang here to understand that if you or they forget your manners again when speaking to me, I will upset the table. I don't imagine," continued he, as he looked saucily, but with an evil glitter in his eye, into one after another of the scowling faces that were around him, "I don't imagine that your education is very extended, but it is possible that you know what it means when one of my class says that if the game isn't played fair he will upset the table; but if you don't" — and here the gambler whipped a six-shooter from his pocket — "I'll say right here that if one of you ever gets careless of speech when talking to me, I'll lift the top of his head while the word is on his tongue. Do any of you chaps want to pick this up?" and as he asked the question, the deadly glitter in his eye grew deadlier.

There was no mistaking the effect of the gambler's threat; for scarce had his mouth closed, before the outlaws broke forth in abject protestations of their regret, if they had ever offended him. The half-breed, who was cunning enough to see that he could not afford, at such a juncture, to alienate the support of any one, much less the support of so cool-headed and determined

a man as the gambler — was loudest of all in his apologies. Indeed, he overdid the thing, and it was as much to interrupt the disagreeable flow of his speech, as aught else, that the gambler, breaking suddenly in upon them, said laughingly, —

"All right; you have rather a poor hand, so we will pack the cards and start anew. I'll stay at the camp, and you go down and murder the Trapper, — for that's the word to call it. But you had better notch your cards, for the old fellow holds a strong hand, and you want to play your papers about right, or he'll take your tricks. Do you want the giant, or are you five enough?"

"I don't know," answered the half-breed, "call him up and let us see what he says."

The gambler lifted a silver whistle to his lips, and blew a signal of two sharp notes, with a third that prolonged itself quiveringly.

In a moment a man came round the corner of the lodge, from the direction of the big tent, and joined them.

He was a giant, indeed. In height he was at least full seven feet, built in burliest proportions. Judged from the athletic standpoint he was over stout; but monstrous as was his size, he did not impress one as being clumsy in action. As to his nationality it would be difficult to decide. His skin was as black as the blackest negro's. His monstrous bullet head was matted with curls of coarsest wool; yet his nose was straight, and his lips were of moderate thickness. His cheek bones were high, and a straggling beard ran its

circle round the curvature of the huge face from ear to ear. His eyes were black in color and mild in look. "A huge, benevolent brute, put into human form," might have been the judgment of one who attempted to analyze the strange creation, and yet a brute, who, though naturally of sluggish action, if once thoroughly aroused, might prove a lion in strength and a tiger in ferocity.

For an instant he stood looking mildly at the group, and then, turning his eyes toward the gambler, he lifted his huge hand awkwardly to his head, and, with a more awkward attempt at a salute, said, —

"What is it, kunnel?"

"I am not a colonel, you son of Ajax," said the gambler, and he laughed merrily up into the ponderous face in front of him; "what do you call me colonel for?"

The man made no reply, but his face began to smile. I use the word *began* discriminatingly, for certainly nothing short of a process, including the passage of a certain amount of time, could bring a change to so vast a countenance. You have noted, doubtless, reader, that small dogs bark quick, and deliver themselves on the instant; but the huge mastiff makes preparation when he is to sound forth his sonorous signal. So it was with this monstrous human. He moved slowly to the results of his action. Even when he stepped, you could see the preparation for the motion going on within his huge bulk; and when he raised his arm, it was as if within his frame shafts and pulleys had been put up in order to effect the movement.

We say he *began* to smile. His mouth was of enormous proportions, and the smile began at either corner as a ripple begins at either end of a circular beach that indents a coast, and runs, nearing the centre, till the two racing points of white meet in the middle; so his smile starting at either corner of his mouth, where it recessed itself underneath the overhanging cheeks, ran along the curving lines of his lips until the two sections came together at the centre, and lifted the lips apart in laughter.

It was only after full time had transpired, and the change which occurs in a countenance passing from gravity to laughter had by this laborious process been fully developed, that the huge being made answer to the gambler's interrogation, and then he said, —

"Every man's a kunnel that bosses things."

"The next time you try to get up a laugh, you human pyramid," responded the gambler, "I'll time you. Your laugh is slower than a sunrise, but I will admit that it fills the whole world when it comes," and the gambler laughed like a happy boy at his own wit, and the good-natured benevolence of the monster in front of him.

"What do you want me for?" asked the man after a pause. "I don't like to leave the tent, for where I'm put I stay. You called, kunnel, and I came, for I do as you say, as I was told by him who pays me, but if you have nothing for me to do I had better go back."

"In a moment," answered the gambler, "our friends here are going on a little trip, — going to make a call

— and they didn't know but that you would like to go along with them."

"How many are they to meet?" asked the giant.

"One," answered the gambler.

The man might be slow of motion, but it was evident that he was no fool, nor lacking wit, for as the gambler answered one, he looked toward the five outlaws, held up four fingers of one huge hand, and one finger of the other, and made preparations for another laugh.

The implication was so direct that the outlaws themselves felt the sting of the satire, and the half-breed said, speaking suddenly, while his eyes gleamed wickedly at the giant, —

"Stay by the tent; we don't want you; I thought it was only fair to offer you the chance."

The giant without a word turned slowly on his heel, and paced with lazy gait back to his post. The gambler retired to the lodge and proceeded to clean the pistol he had used that morning, whistling a merry tune as he worked, although he knew, as he said to himself as he stopped for a moment between two lively bars, "that the old man's life is at stake, and the cards are packed."

The outlaws drew apart by themselves, and proceeded to concoct their murderous plan.

At three o'clock they ate their dinner, and left the camp, and striking into the woods started towards the Trapper's cabin.

The gambler who was seated on a log amusing him-

self, practising some favorite tricks with a pack of highly enamelled cards, saw the five steal away on their murderous errand; noted that four were armed only with their knives, but that the half-breed had knife and revolver both, and as the last man disappeared behind a balsam thicket, said, —

"Four aces and a joker! They'll take the pile, unless the old man upsets the table."

At six o'clock a man crept up to the corner of the Trapper's cabin, and putting his ear to the butts of the logs listened. Then he lifted a small stick that lay on the ground and rubbed it up and down the cabin's side with sharp quick motions. Not a sound from within.

A look of fiendish joy broke over the half-breed's face — for it was he — and he said, —

"Gone, dogs and all; we have got him!" and he swore a dreadful oath; then blew a sharp whistle, and passing round the corner of the cabin, lifted the latch of the door and stepped boldly in. In a moment the four companions joined him, and there, within the old man's cabin, stood his five enemies, plotting his death.

The outlaws acted with great discretion — they were thoroughly under the control of the half-breed, and he was a man of skill and experience in woodcraft and accustomed to the management of deadly undertakings. By his orders not a thing was touched in the cabin, not even a chair was moved from its place. In the inspection that the villain made of the cabin he discovered a trap-door, which lifted, revealed a stairway leading

into the cellar. Down this the half-breed passed, pistol in hand — and when he returned the look of satisfaction on his face showed that his plan was formed.

"It's just as I expected," he said to his gang: "the old fool has gone to hide his dogs, thinking that we wouldn't attack until night, and left the way to his death open to us. It'll be a quiet job, boys," he continued, "as I fancied when I ordered you to leave your shooting-irons at home, for the knife is surer than a bullet and gives no alarm. The cellar is large and deep, the trap-door without a bolt, and the stairway steep. Down into the cellar with you and loosen the cleats that hold the top stair, so that should the old cuss mistrust anything, or come into the cellar by accident, he'll come head foremost; and if his fall don't break his neck, it'll stun him for a moment, and our knives will finish the work. So down with you while I shut the door and sweep up the dirt we've brought in on the floor, — for we are dealing with a man whose eye is keen and who knows how to use it when his life is threatened."

In obedience to this command, the four men descended into the cellar, and soon had the cleat of the upper stair so weakened that it would give way at the least pressure. Then the leader, having arranged matters rightly up-stairs, also descended carefully into the cellar, and all with their knives drawn awaited the coming of the Trapper. What fate is it that waits on human life, blinding the good to their peril and permitting them to walk into the deadly toils the wicked have laid for them?

That same hour, four miles down the Racquette, a passer would have seen a boat, drawn up into a little creek, that emptied itself into the river at the base of an overhanging hill. Had he landed, prompted by curiosity, and followed a trail that led through the marsh grass, some forty rods beyond, he would have come upon a man seated on the banks of the stream at the foot of a pine, with two dogs, lying one on his right hand, the other on his left, with their muzzles resting on either leg. Could the man have crept near enough to have heard the words that were being spoken, he would have heard the Trapper say,—

"It be a leetle hard, pups, yis it sartinly be a leetle hard, for a man at my time of life to be parted from his dogs, considerin' the time we have consorted together, and the comfort we be to each other. But the vagabonds have sworn to pizen ye, and though ye be sensible pups, yit natur is natur, and it's onreasonable to think that ye would refuse to eat. Leastwise Rover, I conceit that ye would sartinly make a fool of yerself and eat meat from any man's hand ef ye knowed it was pizen. I've better thought of Sport, for the Lad was a timid boy, and didn't consort with strangers, and a dog's ways be the ways of his master, as I've noted, and I sartinly think that Sport would be more reasonable and even show his teeth to the vagabonds ef they tempted him."

"And now, pups," said the old man, as he rose to his feet, "there is no tellin' when we three meet ag'in, for the vagabonds will be up to their deviltry, and the

boy isn't here. Here is meat enough to last ye a week, ef ye be reasonable in yer appetite, but ef ye be wasteful ye'll sartinly fast without any credit to ye afore the week be ended. The water is within reach, and ef wust comes to wust, and the man that leaves ye don't come back to ye, ye can use yer teeth on the thong, and take yer own course to the camp. The boy will find yer there when he comes in, and yer noses will keep ye alive until then. I shall sartinly try to sarcumvent the vagabonds, but my years be many and it may be the Lord's time to call has come. But I shan't go till I'm sartin he's in arnest, and I've helped him out a leetle in his management of the vagabonds on the P'int. And now, pups," said the old man again, as he turned to go, "I say good-by to ye, not knowin' what'll happen. Ef ye come back to the cabin and find me one way, it'll be all right. Ef ye come back to the cabin and find me another way, why then do ye stay by the cabin till the boy comes in, and then it will be all right; for he'll know what to do with me, and he'll know what to do with ye, for we talked both matters over afore our last partin'. Yis," said the Trapper to himself, as he turned back on his trail and started to his boat, "it will be all right whichever way the pups find me; but it's hard for a man of my years to be parted from his dogs."

It was well-nigh on to eight o'clock when the Trapper approached his cabin, which he did with the utmost caution. Not until he had circled it three several times with narrowing circles, and at last had inspected the

inside of his home through a hole cut in the wall by himself for such an emergency, did he venture to enter; and even then he did it with his rifle cocked and his finger on the trigger. But no one was within the room; that was certain; and, having closed the door, he proceeded to kindle a fire, that he might cook his supper. He pulled the table to the centre of the room and supplied it with the necessary dishes, pausing now and then to listen. But no sound disturbed him, and, confident that his enemies had not yet moved, he said, —

"It's jest as I thought. The vagabonds ain't the ones to strike openly in the daytime, but to sneak in upon ye when ye be asleep. I conceited that I'd have time to git the pups off and be back afore they started their diviltry, and I've done it. The cabin is a good un, and I can hold it a week agin a rigiment of the scamps; and ef they can be outlyin' round this log-house for a week and keep their number good, they're better at dodgin' and hidin' than I think they be. I'll go down and see ef the water pipe in the cellar runs clear, for ef they actually lay siege to the shanty the man inside will want water and powder both. I'll draw the smaller bar across the door, afore I go down, for there's no tellin' how soon the knaves will have their ears agin the logs, and I don't propose to have them play any of their tricks on me. A square, honest sort of a fight is one thing, but a sneakin' trick is another.

"There," continued he, as he dropped the smaller of two bars across the stout door, "that wouldn't stand a

batterin' ram, for sartain, but a man who tried to push in would make a good deal of noise, and when he got his head through he'd find a rifle and a man back of it lookin' at him. They mustn't think to outwit an old man whose head has whitened on the trail, and who know'd the meanin' of an ambushment afore they was born."

So saying, the Trapper threw an extra stick on the fire, and then going to the trap-door, he lifted it and started to descend. But no sooner had he put his full weight upon the upper stair, than the slab, whose support had been weakened by the outlaws, suddenly gave way, and the Trapper dropped like a plummet into the cellar.

CHAPTER VI.

THE position in which the Trapper was thus placed, through the cowardly trick of his enemies, was one of extremest peril. It is doubtful if, in his long life — much of which had been spent amid scenes of danger and of death — he had ever been in greater peril; for his enemies were on the alert and expectant of the very thing that had happened. Still, expectant as they were of his descent, the suddenness of it had taken them, as it were, by surprise, for an instant elapsed before they threw themselves forward upon the Trapper, who, they never doubted, was lying insensible at the foot of the stairs.

That instant's hesitation on their part saved his life. The old man, by the rarest of good fortune, had put his feet upon the stair with his body at such a pose that when it gave way under him it did not pitch him forward — in which case he would surely have struck upon his head — but shot him, like a stake driven at an oblique angle into the water, feet foremost down the stairway. It was a rapid descent, in truth, and one calculated to confuse the minds of most; but, habituated as he was to startling emergencies, his faculties were held well in hand, and even as he fell, his mind with lightning-like action had calculated the cause of the mishap and drawn the true

conclusion, that his enemies themselves were in the cellar. As good luck would have it, the stout stair, — an oak slab some five feet long and as many inches wide, and of goodly thickness, — which had given way when he put his feet upon it as he started to descend, had gone into the cellar with him. And when he landed at the bottom it was actually in the grasp of one of his hands.

The cellar was in total darkness. Not an enemy could be seen, but the Trapper knew as well as if the cellar was flooded with light, that his enemies were there. Without hesitating an instant, therefore, he seized the stout slab in his hands, and with a yell that seemed to lift the very floor over his head he plunged into the darkness, swinging the rude but powerful weapon that merest chance had placed in his grasp, with all his force, right and left. His foes, crouching with their knives drawn, in the centre of the cellar, as he plunged into the gloom were in the very act of throwing themselves upon him. The first sweep that he made with the oaken stair hit the foremost one full in the breast and flung him back as if he had been but a bundle of straw. A scream of startling agony escaped him as he received the unexpected and painful blow.

The outlaws were caught in their own toils and taken in their own net. Their very numbers were to their disadvantage, for in the darkness they could but be governed by sounds. Nor did they dare to strike at any form that brushed by them, with their knives, lest

they should stab one of their own number. Once, the Trapper stumbled over a barrel and fell prostrate, with two of his enemies on the top of him; but he threw them off as though they were but boys; and seizing the barrel by the ends he sent it flying through the darkness at a hazard — where it struck or whom it hit was of no account to him.

The uproar in the cellar was indescribable. The scurrying of feet, the thud of bodies as they struck against the wall, the scramble and plunge of forms across the floor, oaths, curses, and groans, rose out of the darkness and from every corner of the cellar as if pandemonium itself had broken loose. Amid it all the Trapper's voice rose wrathful and loud: —

"Come on, ye vagabonds!" he yelled. "Come on, ye knaves. I'll give ye a tech of the jedgment. Git into a man's cellar, will ye? Sneak in on him when he's gone to hide his pups from yer pizenin'. I'll larn ye a lesson that'll gin ye manners in yer devilment."

It was by a common movement, suggested by instinct and not by any command of their leader, that the outlaws, recognizing their inability to contend against their invisible enemy, broke in a wild rush for the stairway and scrambled to the room overhead. But the Trapper was not a man to be left behind in such circumstances. He heard their feet on the stairs, and he, too, joined them in their rush.

So quick, indeed, was he in his action that he reached the upper room in advance of one of the outlaws; and

four of his enemies, with himself in their midst, landed on the floor overhead at the same instant.

Without giving them a moment to recover from their confusion, the Trapper renewed the contest the instant his feet struck the floor. Indeed, the rage of the old man was enough to appall any but the most desperate of characters. His eyes flamed, and his face was as the face of a lion when springing upon his prey,—set, wrathful, on fire.

The first man that aimed a blow at him he seized by the shoulder, and spun him round as if he had been a top; but the outlaws, confident in their numbers and determined as he, fought him with desperate energy. The fifth man had clomb from the cellar, and with a yell actually landed upon his back, but before he could collect himself to make a thrust with his knife, the Trapper's hand had seized him by the collar, and with a sudden wrench of supreme strength had dragged him over his head and sent him reeling against his comrades, who were in the act of rushing at him.

But successful as the old man had been thus far in his defence, he recognized the perilous odds with which he was contending, and his courage rose fiercely to the issue. There was no time to grasp his rifle, nor did the half-breed dare to use his pistol, for the fight was at close quarters and the antagonists inextricably mingled. Once had a knife drawn the old man's blood; twice had his clothes been cut, and his shirt had been torn from his breast leaving it bare. It was then that the Trapper,—perhaps from thought, perhaps in the

wildness of his rage, as he swept past the fire-place in full pursuit of the half-breed, whom, above all others, he longed to get within his grasp, — seized a blazing brand from the fire and flung it full in the faces of his foes. Another followed, and another still, and then seizing the fore stick, flaming as it was in the middle, the old man turned upon his enemies like a lion at bay. The blazing brands which he flung at those thirsting for his blood, falling on floor and bed and skins alike, had set the cabin on fire, and smoke already began to fill the room.

At this juncture, when the confusion was at its height, and the shouts and noise of the combatants deadened all sounds, the door of the cabin was suddenly broken open, and, as the door swung inward, a man burst into the room. And a most remarkable looking man he was.

Tall? Yes, taller than the Trapper by half a head. Stout? No, lean to thinness; a man with legs and arms of such enormous length that the trunk of his body seemed but a handle created by facetious nature for their accommodation. His clothes, as compared to his body which they fractionally covered, looked like an abbreviated sentence. There was an expression of despair in his pantaloons, reaching as they did, barely to his ankle-joints, as if they had struggled to stretch themselves to the necessary limit, but had ignominiously failed, and were in a state of chronic disappointment at their want of success — perhaps of sublime resignation. His coat was of the "swallow-tail" cut, short in the

waist, and disproportionally elongated in the tails. The bony wrists protruded beyond the sleeves, as if the hands intended some day to part company entirely with them. The collar rolled back from the spare, skinny neck, which was strongly individualized with an "Adam's apple" of awkward size. His head was small; and thatched with a light wisp of yellowish hair. Forehead narrow but high. Eyebrows of the thinnest. Eyes small, gray, and sparkling. Mouth large; lips thin; while a band of straggling whiskers — each hair standing apart from its fellows, like awkward country boys at a party before they have been introduced, and don't know what to do with themselves — ran their bushy hedge round the face from ear to ear. A Yankee? Undoubtedly. A thoroughbred Yankee? Decidedly. Not a cross of blue-blood in his veins. A pure, unadulterated Yankee; true to his type, individual, extraordinary.

Into the cabin, as we have said, this astonished and astonishing individual burst, as the door flew open — burst and stood! For a moment, we say, he stood staring with open mouth and bulging eyes at the dreadful scene. The old Trapper, brand in hand, facing his five enemies, only partially revealed amid the smoke: the blazing bed, the smoking skins, the overturned table, and scattered chairs, and as he took in the awful confusion of the scene, he breathed a long breath, slipped a pack from his back, and, as he straightened himself to his full height again, exclaimed, —

"*Gosh!*"

And then, fearless of danger and with a shout like a boy's when he breaks from the schoolhouse toward the play-ground, he launched himself into the midst of the outlaws.

His manner of fighting was as extraordinary as his appearance, and the spirit which he exhibited under the circumstances would have provoked generous laughter, from observers, for he went into the fight not merely with entire fearlessness of danger, but with the boisterous abandon with which a plucky but awkward youth at a New England "Training" goes into a wrestling match. In spite of his length and leanness, his agility was demonstrated by the first leap he made, for it landed him in the very midst of the outlaws.

Indeed, it was due to the suddenness of his attack, beyond doubt, that he escaped the deadly thrusts of the knives with which the villains were armed, and whose points otherwise would have met in his heart. As it was, he was in their very midst before they were aware of it, and before they could make a motion he had swept his long arms around two of them, and had started for the door.

One wriggled himself out of his clutch, and falling on to the floor, seized hold of the long tails of his coat, endeavoring to drag him down. But the pendant extremities of the garment parted from the body, and the Yankee reached the doorway with the kicking, screaming, and swearing outlaw in his grasp; and "canting" him up with a motion of his knee as if he had been a bag of meal, the Down-Easter pitched

him headlong through the doorway into the darkness: then turned.

Nor did he turn an instant too soon, for the villain who had escaped his clutch had regained his feet, and vengefully mad, had bounded forward and was in the very act of plunging his knife into the Yankee's back.

"Darn ye!" yelled the Yankee, as he warded off the blow with one of his bony arms, "tear a feller's jacket, will ye? Take that!" and with the other hand he gave his antagonist a slap in the face that sent him reeling backward into the smoke.

The Trapper had, in the meantime, not been idle. The instant the Yankee had landed in the midst of the outlaws, the old man, dropping the blazing log he held in his hand, rushed headlong upon them. He struck the group with such violence that his three foes and himself rolled upon the floor together. And when the Yankee had knocked his assailant backward into the smoke, and looked for another antagonist, little could he see but a writhing bunch of legs and bodies. In an instant a man was flung headlong out of the smoke as if he were a log, and fell with a heavy thud, quivering at his feet.

"Pass 'em out, old man!" yelled the Yankee, as he grabbed the stunned outlaw by the nape of his neck and one leg, and pitched him through the doorway, "pass 'em out: and be darnation quick about it, for the chimney don't draw wuth a cent, and the damper's down. Jerusalem!" he shouted, as another body — this time the half-breed's — was pitched out of the smoke with

such violence, that striking the Yankee full in the chest, it nearly knocked him over, "Jerusalem! there's somebody in that smoke that's good at wrastlin', I sweow. Go it, ye blue-skinned punkin," he yelled as he pitched the half-breed through the door, "that's the way we du it deown in Maine!" And as he grabbed another body as it reeled out of the smoke and passed it with a push into the darkness, he screamed, "Go it, old feller, you're a ripper. — 'How doth the little busy bee improve each shinin' hour.' That's the dandruff!" he yelled, as still another form staggered towards him, and he lifted him with a kick, outward. "How many more have ye got in that hill? Rake 'em out; sling 'em this way, tops and all. Here's the boss tater," and he made a rush at a huge form as it plunged toward him out of the smoke, "whoop-p" —

But the yell died out in his mouth as he sent it, for instead of lifting the man as he intended, the man lifted him; lifted him as if he had been an infant, and then as suddenly dropped him upon the floor; and the Yankee, scrambling to his feet, stood face to face with the Trapper.

For a moment the two looked at each other, and then the Trapper said, —

"This isn't jest the time for talkin', young man. You've done me a good turn, and John Norton won't forgit it. You'll find three buckets of water to the left of the fire-place. The fire is of no great account, for blankets and skins burn slow. Open the winders and we'll put things to rights. No, no, leave it open," con-

tinued the old man, as the Yankee started to close the door, "the knaves have had enough of it for one night, and are more eager to git to their camp than to try us agi'n. Ef ye shet the door we'll be smoked like a ham in a barrel when the punk is under it. Lively, boy, or the skins and the blankets will look like a pelt with a dozen buckshot through it."

It was some ten minutes, perhaps, before the fire was wholly extinguished, and the smoke blown from the room. Then the Trapper shut and barred the door and closed the windows, which were made by cutting a section out of the solid logs which composed the sides of the building, the section cut out being hung on hinges so that the windows, in case of necessity, could be stopped like the port-holes of a man of war. When the door and windows had thus been securely fastened, the Trapper started the fire anew in the huge fire-place, and lighting a candle, placed it on the centre of the table, which had been put in its customary place; then took a survey of the premises. In different parts of the room, the Yankee had found three knives and the revolver of the half-breed. These he placed on the table and then he turned toward the Trapper.

The old man looked the younger one over from head to foot for at least a minute, and then he said, —

"Young man, what may I call ye?"

"Waal, neow," answered the Yankee, "that's a sticker. I've had so many names that I don't exactly know what to call myself; I sweow ef I du! But I reckon the old folks knew about what they

was up to when they sot me a-goin', and they called me Jim."

"Jim who?" asked the Trapper.

"Waal, neow," answered the Yankee, "that's the fun of it, darn ef 'taint. I don't b'lieve ye could hit it ef ye guessed all night. Ye see I was born deown in Maine, and there's more long names deown in Maine than eny other state in Ameriky. Neow ye needn't b'lieve it, but there's lakes deown there that has names longer than the lakes they belong to, by a long shot; I'll be darned ef there aint. Ye can travel half a day and ye can't git reound the end of 'em."

"Is your name a long one?" asked the Trapper.

"That's the fun of it," answered the Yankee, "I'll be darned ef 'taint. There aint a long name in Maine that belongs to a man; the lakes used them all up, I sweow ef they didn't. There isn't a double-bladed, jack-knife name in the hull state. Long? Jerusalem, I reckon 'taint long. It's shorter than a rabbit's tail."

"Out with it, out with it," interrupted the Trapper; "what shall I call ye?"

"Waal, neow, it don't make eny difference what ye call me, darned ef it does; but I jest as soon tell ye the name the old folks started me with as not, It's the only thing they ever did give me eout and eout, and it aint wuth a copper, I sweow ef 'tis. My name is Jim."

"Jim what?" asked the Trapper again.

"BEAN," replied the Yankee, "*Jim Bean.* Darn mean name, ain't it?"

"I never heerd the name afore," replied the Trapper, "but it's good enough ef it sarves its parpose."

"Never heerd the name!" exclaimed the Yankee, "waal, I sweow that's funny. Why, there's more Beans deown in Maine than ye could put into a ten acre lot ef the stumps was all eout."

"What do ye do?" again interrupted the Trapper.

"Waal," answered the Yankee, "that's the fun of it. I kin du enything, I'll be blowed ef I can't. The Beans are a cute set. There aint one of the hull tribe that can't make money faster than thunder. We're mighty smart on a swap, I kin tell ye. Got enything to trade, eh? I haint made a cent in so long that I feel like a deacon at a funeral, darn ef I don't. Come, neow, I'll give ye twenty cents for that knife, sure as Moses," and the Yankee lifted one of the three knives from the table and rubbed the hilt — a plate of solid silver — on his breeches' leg, while the glitter of greed came into his little gray eyes.

"Ye be welcome to the knife, young man, ef ye want it. It belongs to the half-breed, and has done devil's work enough, for sartin."

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed the Yankee, "you don't mean to give me the knife, du ye? Darn ef I aint a fool. I thought the handle was silver?" and the Yankee looked searchingly up into the old man's face.

"So it is, boy, so it is," answered the Trapper; "solid silver it is, and the blade is a good un too."

"And du you *give* it to me, — me, Jim Bean?" gasped the Yankee; "why, it's wuth five dollars!"

"Twice that, twice that," responded the Trapper, "twice that at least, for the blade is a good un, and ye be welcome to it; and I wish it was wuth more'n it is, for ye have done me a good turn, and the Lord knows ye desarve it."

"Waal, I swear!" It was all the Yankee could say. His astonishment was too great for speech.

"How did ye happen to come as ye did?" asked the Trapper. "The Lord sartainly sent ye to help an old man in his trouble."

"No, he didn't," answered the Yankee. "I come in on my own hook, and a darn mean time I've had of it. Ye see I've got my pack full of stuff to peddle with — the Beans are great peddlers — and they told me at the Saranac where I was peddlin that ef I could git a boat I could peddle clear through the woods, and sell the boat when I got through for twice what I paid for it, and I swallered it hull — darn ef I didn't. And I've rowed that boat mor'n a thousand miles and never found a house. Ef I ever git back to them fellers, I'll sell them some watches that'll make them remember Jim Bean as long as they live, and half of eternity — darn ef I don't — and that's the way I come here."

"The Lord sent ye, boy, the Lord sartainly sent ye," answered the Trapper.

"Dunno abeout that," persisted the Yankee, "it's mighty pious to say so, and there never was a Bean that wasn't a church member, darn ef there was. Ye see we're a sort of religius and well-to-do family. The old man is a deacon, and the way he'd pray deown in

the old red schoolhouse, at the crotch of the road, after the turnups was pulled, was amazin'. Jerusalem! how I've heerd dad jest go tearin' through the Scriptur', Friday nights, in that old schoolhouse when the elder was there, and he got fairly settled deown tu it; but it all depended on the start. I always knew when he was goin' to du it up brown by the way he started off; but ef he got a good square start — got the two or three fust verses of Scriptur' out right — there wasn't any power under Heaven could fetch him up till he landed with a regular Bean flourish on the other side of Jordan.

CHAPTER VII.

"I am not sartin that I understand the drift of yer talk, boy," answered the Trapper, "for yer words be new to me, and ye speak of people and things that I never heerd of afore. I have heerd men pray, — yis, the Lad was sartinly gifted in that direction — and I be a prayin man myself when the mood be on me, but my prayin be done with my eyes and my feelin's, and not with the tongue. The Moravians pray in a house, and a noisy time they make of it, for they shout as ef they was ambushin' the Lord, and wanted to scare him into doin' as they wish; but I pray in an orderly way, and without use of the tongue, and in a house not builded by the hand of man; and in this I conceit I have the right of it as agin the Moravians, — not to say that their intentions aint right, for a man with a head as white as mine shouldn't jedge, but still I conceit I have the right of it, for the Scriptur' says that the Lord of Marcy looketh at the heart; and Henry has told me that the Master himself never prayed in housen, but acted like a man with good jedgment, and went up into a mountain when he prayed, not to speak of his love of the lakes of the country where he lived. Yis, yis, it may be all right that yer father prayed in the schoolhouse, as ye say he did; and I don't say that a man shouldn't git arnest-like at times when talkin' with the Lord, for

they be two sides to everything, and he would sartinly hear both sides of the case, and would rather like, as I conceit, that a man should make the p'ints clear, and lay the sense of the matter down strong. But a schoolhouse is a onfortunit place to pray in, for sartin, onless the man be as full of words as a young hound is of noise, in which case I don't conceit it makes much difference where the prayin' be done; for a man whose prayin' be all noise is pritty sure to miss the Lord as a young hound misses the game. The quiet hunter brings the buck home, and the man who talks least and thinks most gits the ear of the Lord fust, as I jedge."

The old Trapper had delivered this opinion with gravity of voice and countenance, and with the deliberation of one accustomed in matters of moment to use the fewest possible words. The Yankee was not without fine feeling, as was evidenced by the respectful manner with which he listened to the Trapper as he gave him thus sententiously his opinion of praying. Perhaps the Yankee felt that the discussion had passed beyond his depth; perhaps the feeling of deference to the other's age and apparent wisdom restrained his speech; but from whatever cause, he remained silent, and the Trapper, after a moment's pause, resumed, his mind reverting to the struggle through which he had just passed, and the peril he had just escaped:

"I have been in many a scrimmage," he said, "sence my feet fust struck the trail, and few be the hills atwixt here and the great lakes that haint heerd the crack of my rifle, when lead was sent for a parpose and powder

wasn't wasted; but I doubt ef I was ever in a wuss fix than ye found me in to-night, for they had fairly outwitted a man that peace had made forgitful of his caution; and they had me at odds, and in a place where the odds counted agin me; and ef ye hadn't come, boy, as ye did, the Lord of Marcy only knows how it would have ended."

"Waal, I sweow it was gittin' a little hazy when I bust the door open and walked in on ye. Ye see I heerd yeou when I fust landed deown in the beach, and couldn't think what ye was up tew, darn ef I could. Jerusalem! what a racket ye did make! I thought at fust ye was havin' a regilar old-fashioned break-down with no gals at it, and apple-jack plenty, and so I histed along to jine in, for I'm a regilar Bean at any such sort of a twist, and nine in the pod at that; so I histed along darnation quick, and rapped at the door, for there wasn't a ticket to be had for love nor money, darn ef there was."

"So ye knocked at the door, did ye?" asked the Trapper laughingly.

"Reckon I did," returned the Yankee, "and darned little good the knocking did; and I made up my mind ye was mighty unneighborly, or else the floor was full and there wasn't a chance for another pole in the garden."

"So it was, boy, so it was," interrupted the Trapper, laughing. "Yis, the floor was full, for sartain, but what did ye think had become of the fiddler?"

"I didn't know," answered the Yankee, "unless he

was corned, and I thought yeou was all on a tare, I did neow, I swanny, I did, for yeou was goin' it with yer boots on" —

"How did ye come to break open the door?" interrupted the Trapper, whose sense of humor was thoroughly quickened at the experience the Yankee was vividly narrating.

"I got my dander up. Yeou see the Beans are full of snuff, and after I'd stood there tryin' tew make yeou fellers inside hear me, longer than a funeral, I was madder than a hornet; and I walloped that old door in a way to raise the blisters, darn ef I didn't."

"How did ye shove it open?" queried the Trapper. "Did ye have to put yer strength to it?"

"*Shove!*" answered the Yankee, "I didn't get it open by shovin', not by a long shot. Gosh! that door was stouter than a stun fence. I shoved, and I shoved; and all the while yeou fellers were cuttin' it down like jiminy, inside. The more I shoved the madder I got. By'm-by I got madder than a Guinea hen, and I drawed off and gin it a regular old ripper of a kick."

"Ye did well, ye did well, boy," interrupted the Trapper, "yis, ye did it jedgmatically, for a sudden blow parts a fastenin' when a slower un wont. But what did ye think of the dance when ye got in; didn't it look a leetle smoky for a frolic?"

"Darned ef it didn't," answered the Yankee; "I tell ye I was all tuck back, like a feller dropped deown in a graveyard. I sweow if I wa'n't."

"What did ye make of it, boy, what did ye make of it?" asked the Trapper.

"Make of it?" answered the Yankee, "there wa'n't but one thing tew make of it, from the Bean p'int of view, and that was, that five miserable sneaks was pitchin' into one old man; and though I come in to peddle, and never git into any fusses, yit there never was a Bean on our side of the family, that didn't love wrastlin' better than he loved eatin', I'll be blowed ef there was. And when I see them fellers goin' for ye, I fairly itch to git hold of 'em, so I went for 'em like a smack for a school of herrin'. Jerusalem crickets! didn't we sorter yank 'em reound, though? Gosh! yeou sent 'em out of that smoke like taters eout of the tail of a cart. But how did they come to pay ye a visit? It must be a darned mean neighborhood reound here. Ye don't invite 'em often, do ye?"

"I didn't ax 'em to come at all, boy; and they don't belong to these parts. No: they be vagabonds from abroad; and their arrand to the woods be an arrand of deviltry, for sartin. And they knowed John Norton would be arter 'em in their wickedness, and so they conceited to murder me; and they'd done it, too, ef the Lord hadn't sent ye to help me as ye did."

"Reckon not, old man," interrupted the Yankee. "Yeou was a tarnal lively corpse when I bust in the door. I sweow to gracious, yeou was; and yeou'd walloped the whole set, darned ef yeou wouldn't, or I don't know anything about wrastlin'."

"It may be, it may be," returned the Trapper. "For

a man in the right is stronger than them that be in the wrong. But yer comin' was well-timed, and the Lord sent ye inter the woods for something better than peddlin', young man."

"I hope so, I swan I do," returned the Yankee, "for I haint made a tarnal red cent sence I tuk the boat; and I've rowed the old scow a thousand miles, darned ef I haint, and haven't seen a house nuther; and I ought to have made a dollar and a half a day right along, — but I guess the houses are thicker further on, eh?"

"Housen, boy!" answered the Trapper, laughing. "Lord, ye can go a hundred mile as a goose flies afore ye come to a house, or a shanty either, for that matter. No, no, ef peddlin' be yer arrand, ye be off the trail, for sartin; and ye should git back to the settlements, and ply yer trade there as quick as ye can; for leetle be the barginin' and sellin' done in the woods; though a month later, perhaps, ye might find a few camps where ye could traffic a leetle, for the city folks be whimsical, specially the wimmin, and they might buy some of yer wares in their frolicsomeness, — for a peddler would be a strange sight, for sartin, a hundred mile from a house. But leetle be the gain ye'll make in the woods, boy, and ye should foller the heel of yer trail till it run ye into the settlements ag'in."

"Waal, I sweow, that's funny. Gosh! I wouldn't have dad kneow what a tarnal fool his son Jim has been for a ten-dollar bill, darn ef I would. But as for

streakin' it back to the settlements, as yeou call them, that's another sort of a tater, old man; and I don't feel like diggin' eout of this bush until I've sampled the lot."

"I don't understand ye, perhaps," resumed the Trapper, after a moment's pause. "But as ye be young and not over wise in the ways of the woods, ye may not understand the object of the vagabonds nor the danger ye run in stayin', and so I might as well tell ye in so many words that ef ye stay with me ye must stay at yer resk, for the knaves have sworn to kill me, and as ye have got mixed up in the matter they'll kill ye, too, arter to-night, ef they can; and so, perhaps, the sooner ye take the heel of yer track the safer it'll be for ye."

"Moses and Elijah!" shouted the Yankee, and he brought his bony knuckles down upon the board table so that the room rang. "Moses and Elijah! old man, yeou don't think Jim Bean's a sneak, dew ye? Gosh Almighty! there never was a Bean yit on our side of the house that was a coward, darn ef there was. Grandfather Eliphalet Bean fit in the Revolution, and there never was a Bean yit that showed the white feather at wrastlin' or fightin', nuther. And ef ye think that this seedlin's agoin' to bile eout of the pot because it's wallopin' a leetle, yeou don't know Jim Bean. I come in here to peddle, that's a fact, and make a leetle honest money to sot me up when I git hum — and I'll dew it yit before I give it up; but darn ef I'm in any hurry abeout it, old man. And ef

ye have got inter a scrape and want a slab-sided cuss that's shanked it up from Maine tew help ye, I'll stay and help yeou sort the pile, and yeou shall see who's the boss tater in the heap, darn ef yeou shan't."

The Trapper had listened to the Yankee with a pleasure which he made no effort to conceal, for courage in whatever form it is shown, or in whatever guise it appears, commands the admiration of the beholder. And no one could have heard the explosion of his companion and not have felt that shrewd, cunning, and supremely selfish as he might be in matters of personal gain, still, mingled with his selfishness was a nobler and more generous spirit ready at any occasion to gain the ascendency, converting the selfish trafficker into a being, temporarily at least, of nobler ambition. Of the genuine pluck of his comrade, the Trapper could have no doubt.

"Ye've got the true grit, boy," answered the Trapper. "Yis, ye've sartinly got the true grit in ye, and the sperit of yer gran'ther needn't be ashamed of ye, for ye ring to the tap as clear as a steel barrel, and ef ye say ye'll stay, stay ye shall, and a man whose head be whitenin' thanks ye for yer offer to help him agin the vagabonds that thirst for his blood. Can ye shoot, boy?"

"Sheoot! I reckon I kin sheoot," answered the Yankee. "I can hit a rabbit's tail at ten rods ef he'll sort of hold still a minit, and the gun don't carry too close," and he laughed boisterously at his own boastful wit. "Gosh, ef I had dad's old king's-arm up here,

and yeou had a gill of shot, I could kill every rabbit in the whole swamp at one whack, darn ef I couldn't."

"Did ye ever shoot a rifle?" queried the Trapper, upon whose mind the Yankee's allusion to a shot-gun had made a dubious impression. "I haven't seed a king's-arm for forty year. The Lord forbid I should ever tech anything but a grooved barrel, and there isn't a shot in the house, for the boy feels as I do in the matter. No, no, shot-guns be good enough for the settlements, I dare say, but it would be a shame for a hunter to keep one in his cabin. Did ye ever shoot a rifle, boy?"

"No, I swan, I didn't," replied the Yankee, "but I guess I could ef I tried, mighty quick."

"I dunno, I dunno," answered the Trapper. "A rifle be a ticklish thing in the hand of a beginner, and mighty leetle use would yer loose shootin' do ye in a scrimmage with the vagabonds. Still it may be ye might git the hang of it arter a few trials, leastwise ye could pertect yerself, and we will give ye the p'ints of the case in the mornin'. What can ye do, boy, ef it comes to downright arnest work?"

"Wrastle! old man, I'm the boss wrastler in the Bean tribe, darn ef I aint; front hold, side hold, collar and elbow back hold, any kind of hold, darn ef it makes any difference. I'm the boss tater in the pile when it comes tew wrastlin'. Ef it comes tew close quarters, sot me down for three of them blue-skinned punkins that was at yer tew-night, and I'll shew ye heow Jim Bean, when his dander is up, can twitch, and yank, and haul 'em

reound. Moses and Elijah! I'll wrastle the hull crowd! Jewilikins, I'm a regular old-fashioned scarlet runner at wrastlin'!"

It was evident that the Trapper was not a little disappointed at — from his point of view — the poor equipment of his companion for a contest such as he knew the coming one with the outlaws would be; for it was plain that however determined he might be, he was in no sense equal in skill to the least of his antagonists. Still he was not wholly discouraged, but was inclined to take a hopeful view of the matter, for he could easily imagine that the contest might, at more than one point of its course, take such a turn that his companion's strength and fearlessness would go far to make good his almost total lack of skill in the use of the weapons which would be used. It was therefore with mingled feelings of hope and regret that he said, —

"I be sorry that ye don't know the use of the *wee*pon, for sartain, but yer heart is right, and that counts a good deal in a scrimmage. Lord, ef the boy was only here! With his rifle on one side of the camp and mine on the other, we could larn them vagabonds a lesson they'd never forgit. But the boy be away, and the vagabonds be here, and the parposes of the Lord must be sarved."

To this soliloquy — for it had been such on the part of the Trapper — the Yankee had listened as one who feels he does not fully understand the thought of the speaker; and not till a moment had elapsed after the old man had ended, did he speak. Then he said, —

"Who are the sneaks that was after yeou to-night, any heow, and what are they duin' that they should be afraid of yeou?"

In reply the Trapper narrated all that had happened, and also what he knew about the half-breed in the past, not omitting the gambler's visit and its result, nor his suspicions about that big tent on the Point. When he had ended the Yankee asked, —

"What dew yeou reckon is in the big tent any heow? Yeou don't think there's a pile of money there, dew yeou? Jerusalem! ef I thought there was, I'd go deoun and wrastle the hull camp for it, darn ef I wouldn't."

For a moment the Trapper made no answer, but remained as one plunged in profound thought. Then he said, —

"No, no, boy, I don't conceit it's money; ef I did the Lord forbid that I should meddle with them about it. I suspect the vagabonds be in a wuss devilment than that. *It's a human bein' that's in that tent, boy, or my name aint John Norton.*"

"Gosh Almighty!" exclaimed the Yankee, "yeou don't say so! Heow dew yeou kneow it?"

"I don't *know* it," replied the Trapper, "that is, I don't know it as a man knows a thing he has seen and is sartin of, but the signs all p'int that way. And now, young man, we'll sot ourselves to work to find out whether I'm right or wrong. We'll rest till mornin', for sleep makes a clear head. Ye needn't worry about the door. The bar is a strong un', and, besides, the vagabonds have got all they want to-night, and will

stick to their camp as a hound that's been whipped to his kennel. Take the bed and I will take the skins. Ef there's a step that moves outside, my ear will be nigh the floor and will hear. Yis, we'll sleep to-night and plan to-morrow. There's a human bein' in that tent, and I suspect it's a woman, too. Ef the boy was only here!"

So saying, the Trapper took his rifle from the brackets and lay down upon the skins by the door, while the Yankee threw his body upon the bed. In a moment his loud and regular breathing gave proof that he was asleep. Once the old man raised his head to listen, then laid it down again, and in a few moments he, too, slept.

While the Trapper and the Yankee were conversing in the cabin, another conversation was being carried on at the Point; for no sooner had the outlaws, after their summary ejection from the cabin, recovered from the effect of their desperate struggle, — which two of them did slowly, and as men from whose bodies the life has been nearly and almost totally driven, — than they started for the Point with all the energy that remained to them. They were thoroughly beaten, and they felt the disgrace of it. The thought of their discomfiture rankled in their guilty breasts and extorted groans and bitter curses from them. The half-breed was at first literally frenzied with rage. Again had he plotted the Trapper's life, and again had he been foiled. Again had he deemed success certain, and again had he met an overwhelming defeat. In the wildness of his rage

and the bitterness of his mortification he cursed and tore his hair, and so transported with madness was he, that he literally grovelled on the ground like him of old time, possessed of the devil. But after his first frenzy was passed, and his blood had slightly cooled, he became calmer, and before he had reached the camp his mind had settled to comparative repose, and his thoughts were busy devising methods of revenge. In this mood he and his companions entered the camp.

The gambler was seated by the fire playing euchre with a "Dummy" — now and then looking dreamily off upon the dusky water, or up into the blue vault, bespangled with innumerable stars, and whistling, between the deals, the fragment of an old revival hymn which he had doubtless heard at some camp-meeting. He was evidently playing a "square hand," as he expressed it, with the Dummy, and luck was against him.

"Egad, that's funny," he said to himself, as he shuffled the cards for the final deal that would decide the "rubber." "The pictures are in league with the old man, and luck backs him to its last dollar. If he gets the ace and the right bower, and I get the left and the joker, I'll win; but if he gets the joker he'll sweep the table. Now let's see how the game goes — for or against him. Egad, all this is nonsense. The old fellow's dead before this and his white hairs dabbled in blood" — and catching something back in his throat as if about to cough, he lifted the cards and glancing over them, laid the ace upon the bark that served him as a

table, and then he lifted the first card from the Dummy's pile, and turning it over, quietly laid it beside his ace.

It was the left bower!

The gambler looked at his hand, and, after a moment's reflection, placed the queen of trumps on the bark. Then, before he played the Dummy's card, he gazed out upon the lake and softly whistled a strain of the hymn; then he reached over, lifted the Dummy's card, and, turning it slowly over, laid it beside his queen.

It was the king of trumps!

Perhaps the gambler's face whitened a trifle; perhaps the lines round the mouth tightened; the firelight was too dim to make one feel certain, — but he looked a moment at the two cards, and, without lifting them, placed the right bower on the board, then, passing his white fingers to the Dummy's pile, he lifted the upper one and calmly turned it face up.

It was the joker!

"The old man wins, by" —

The sentence remained unfinished, for the sharp crack of a broken stick in the bush checked his exclamation, and as he listened, the sound of many steps was plainly heard, coming toward the camp.

CHAPTER VIII.

In a minute the five outlaws emerged from the darkness, and entered into the circle of the firelight. Their personal appearance bore witness of the desperate conflict through which they had passed; for their garments were torn, their faces bruised, and their looks were the looks of those who have just issued from a desperate fray. Two of them walked with great difficulty, being supported by their companions, their faces white as those who suffer from intense pain. It was with evident relief that the whole party threw themselves upon the dry ground near the fire, in front of which was a goodly supply of cooked provisions and a large pot filled with coffee. In a moment they were all busily engaged in appeasing their appetites; eating as men in the woods will after a long fast.

The gambler looked them over with an eye which, while it seemed wholly indifferent, nevertheless took within its gaze every evidence which the outlaws presented calculated to illustrate the character and the result of their adventure. He even whistled a whole stanza of the hymn, as with immovable and passive countenance he gazed first from one to the other At last he said, speaking to the half-breed, —

"How did the game go?"

"It went against us," answered the half-breed gloomily.

"A misplay?" asked the gambler interrogatively.

"Yes," replied the half-breed, "the devil helped him as usual."

"You had a strong hand," returned the other after a pause, during which he had been quietly and perhaps unconsciously shuffling the cards. "You had a strong hand," he continued, "and if you got the lead, I don't see how you could have failed to make your point; but after all you are never quite certain, with the joker in the pack. The old fellow was in luck this morning when I called on him, and I've often noticed that when luck comes in the morning it stays over night."

"His luck has stayed with him, anyway," answered the half-breed. "Our plot was a good one. We had him in our power, — I have had him so twice before, — and now for the third time he has escaped."

"That is his luck," answered the gambler coolly; "there is no playing against luck. A fool in Toronto actually cleaned me out last fall, and he scarcely knew a queen from a jack; and I was playing with a favorite pack, too," and the gambler laughed pleasantly to himself.

"What did you do?" asked the half-breed, in whose mind the gambler's quiet recital of his singular experience had produced the effect of making him forget his own disappointment temporarily.

"I took the bumpkin by the arm and escorted him to the hotel; had him deposit the pile with the clerk;

slept with him that night, and gave him a little advice the next morning."

"What did you advise him?" asked the half-breed.

"I advised him to go home," replied the gambler, laughing. "It was the only time my advice was ever taken, I think," he continued, with a tone of good-natured satire in his voice. "He wanted to divide, but I laughed at him. I actually pushed him aboard of the cars. The last I saw of him he was standing on the platform with his hands full of bills and tears in his eyes. Yes, the fool was actually blubbering. I made it up the next night, and a little over. I was escorted to the cars next morning myself. Quite a company went down to see me off. I haven't been in Toronto since. But how about your game with the Trapper? It looked like a sure thing. How did you get beaten?"

Thus urged, the half-breed recited the experiences of the night; the ambushing of the cabin, the secreting of themselves in the cellar, the Trapper's return, and the dreadful combat, the sudden re-enforcement the old man had received in the person of the Yankee, and the discomfiture of the outlaws. All was told with a vividness of description and energy of voice and gesture, which reproduced each act of the terrible drama in startling clearness to the gambler's mind. He listened to the narration with close attention, but with the coolness which distinguishes the men of his calling. When the recital was over, silence fell upon the group. At last the gambler said, —

"It's all luck, and when luck gets the deal there

is no safety in betting. What do you propose to do next?"

"I propose to try it over again," replied the half-breed savagely. "None of us are hurt badly, and a good night's sleep will put us in good trim again. We will try it over," he muttered, "and the next time we go we shall take something besides knives."

"Don't get excited," said the gambler coolly; "it's a big pile you are playing for, and the man on the other side of the table holds the cards as if he had a strong hand. I think you had better sleep on it before you decide. To-morrow we'll cut for a new deal. Good-night."

So saying, the man who trusted in "luck" stretched himself at length on the ground, and pulling a blanket partially over his body, gazed upward for a moment into the great star-lighted dome, — whistled softly a strain or two of the old Methodist hymn, — then his eyes slowly closed and he slept.

The next day passed without any exhibition of activity by either party. The outlaws spent the greater part of it in sleep, the gambler and the giant keeping watch. Near night a general council was held, and the question of retreat was fully discussed. Two of the outlaws favored the idea, urging in support of their views that the Trapper, when unassisted, even, was a formidable enemy, but that being now re-enforced by the Yankee he was unquestionably able to cause them a vast amount of trouble, if not actual loss. They also called attention to the peculiar character of their en-

terprise and the strong probability that one with the skill and courage of the Trapper would ultimately discover, by some trick or device, the secret of the tent, and so make himself master of all they desired to accomplish. It was evident that upon these two men, at least, the terrible fight in the Trapper's cabin had made a powerful effect, and that they dreaded to push the contest further against a man of so determined a nature, and whom fortune invariably favored.

But with the others an opposite opinion prevailed. The half-breed was bent on revenge, and craved nothing so much as another chance to attempt the Trapper's life. Indeed, his malignity was of the fiercest sort; he even declared that should the decision be against him, and the party endeavor to depart, he himself would remain and seek his revenge alone — that he would never leave the lake alive unless he left the man he hated with so deadly a hatred, a corpse on its shores. This savage feeling the two remaining outlaws shared to the full; each declaring that he would sooner betray the trust committed to his charge, than lose their revenge on the man who had inflicted on them so severe a punishment and so unexpected a disgrace. The gambler listened to each speaker with his customary calmness, and when called upon for his opinion gave it, characteristically, as follows: —

"I think," he said quietly, "that the game must go on. The old man has taken the first tricks and counts the four honors, — that's certain. There's no telling how the next deal will go, for the luck may change;

but the chances are in our favor, — and if they were not, we have got to play the game through all the same. It's a nasty mess," he continued, "and I wish I was out of it; but having consented to make one of the table, I don't propose to throw up the hand. Then again, we couldn't get away if we tried, for the old chap has got his blood up and we couldn't shake him off. I have a feeling that we couldn't move a boat out of this lake without his knowing it, and that means a fight; and if we have got to fight, we stand a better chance to fight it out here than if we try to move, for here we can act in concert and make the odds count against him; but if we make a move the odds will be in his favor, for he can trail us and pick us off in detail, and I fancy that some of you chaps would feel his lead before you had got five miles down the river. I don't think we had better make a move, therefore, — at least for a day or two, — but hold the camp here, and see what will turn up. You know my feeling about killing him. I don't want to do it, but of course we have this little job to attend to, and he must let us alone or take the consequences. But I give you fellows warning that he plays a strong hand, and if you want to make your points you mustn't play your cards carelessly. I don't fancy you need run after him much, for if you don't see or hear him during the night, I shall be mistaken. He isn't a man to study his hand long, as I measure him, and I don't think you had all better sleep to-night. Luck makes a man bold, and he'll order us up before morning. That's my idea of the game."

To this opinion the outlaws all yielded ready assent, — at least all except the half-breed, who ridiculed the idea of the Trapper making any attack upon the camp, defended by such numbers as he well knew it was. He expressed the opinion that the old man would wait an attack, not make one, and advocated that they besiege him in his cabin with the idea of burning or starving him out. It was with great reluctance that he allowed himself to be overruled, but at last he yielded to the more cautious wishes of his companion, and consented to remain in his own camp for that night, at least, only demanding that he should be allowed to take upon himself the sentinel's duty. To this all agreed, and so the matter was decided.

So the day, as we have said, wore away, and no movement was made by either party. The outlaws remained in their camp, and the Trapper in his. The old man had passed the day at a point on the bank which commanded both a view up the lake and the approach to the cabin from the rear. As he watched, his mind was active in devising a plan by which he could accomplish what he had undertaken. His objective point was the big tent in the camp of the outlaws and the rescue of the one who he believed was imprisoned in it. Beyond this he had no desire. He said, speaking to the Yankee, who was in a warlike mood, —

"No, no, boy, I've seed blood enough shed, and a fight should not be craved by a rational bein', — yis, I've had fightin' enough in my day, and I hope I may

never line the sights on a mortal ag'in. But that tent must be looked into for sartin, and the quicker I can git my head within the canvas, the better it'll be for all consarned. So to-night, ef it be dark enough — and I conceit it will be, for the signs in the nor'east p'int in that direction — we'll ambush the vagabonds. Yis," continued the old man, "I'll go into the heart of their camp to-night, and when I come out, I'll know what their devilment means. Here, boy, ye take my place, and ef ye see a boat on the lake, or a bush move in the clearin' back of the cabin, do ye give me the call of the owl and git inside the door as quick as yer legs will carry ye. Now keep yer eyes wide open, and use yer legs ef ye see any movements in the bush, or I wouldn't give one of yer brass watches for yer life; for the vagabonds owe ye a grudge and their powder will barn as quick as an honest man's."

So saying, the old Trapper shouldered his rifle, and taking an axe in his hand, disappeared in the woods to the north of the cabin.

In an hour he returned, bearing on his shoulders two immense barks, which he had peeled from two large spruce trees, some seven feet in length, and going to the beach placed them carefully in the bottom of his boat.

It was well nigh ten o'clock in the evening when he and his companion entered the boat, and after pausing a moment to listen, he pushed it off upon the lake and disappeared in the darkness. Half an hour of paddling brought them within a quarter of a mile of the outlaws'

camp. Then the boat came to a stop, and speaking in a whisper, the old man said, —

"Now, boy, I'm going into the inimies' camp, and while I don't mean to run any resks, still ambushin' is ambushin', and when a man begins to crawl there's no tellin' who he'll crawl ag'inst; and I know the vagabond who leads the gang too well not to know that his eyes and ears won't be shet to-night, though I sartainly expect that he'll be ambushin' the cabin arter us instead of guarding his own as he ought to do. Still, it may be he's been over-ruled by a wiser head than his own, and ef so, he's watchin' for us this minit somewhere back of the lodge or the tent there. Now, boy, we'll go ashore, and I will tell ye my plan. Keep yer knife with ye, but this is to be an ambushment, not a fight, and ef anything happens, and it comes to any arnestness, yer fists and yer legs will sarve ye better in the dark than a *wee*pon. Now remember, boy, that all I want ye to do is to git within sight of the camp so that ye can see what's goin' on — for the fire ye see is kept lit, — and ef ye see anything onusual goin' on, do ye give the signal — two calls of an owl — and arter ye have started — and I sartainly advise ye to hist along as fast as yer legs can carry ye, ef anything should happen — ye may bark like a fox as ye take the few fust leaps, that I may ketch the direction of yer goin'. Keerful now, and make no noise as ye git out of the boat, for nothin' is so safe as silence in an ambushment."

So saying, the old man urged the boat gently to the

shore, and both of the men stepped noiselessly out upon the beach.

"Don't forgit," whispered the Trapper, "don't forgit that the boat is jest beyend the big pine here, for ef ye have to run for it, it would be unfortunit should ye miss it. And ef the vagabonds be arter ye, don't wait for my comin', but push out at once and make yerself safe. Ye'll hear my call on the shore — two croaks of a frog — ef I want ye, and ef ye don't hear me, foller the shore till ye come to the cabin, and expect me afore night. Now, then, let's put on our clothes. I sartinly doubt ef the tailorin' of the settlements could make ye sech a suit." And the old man laughed noiselessly as he ended.

The plan of the Trapper was now revealed, and the Yankee could with difficulty restrain his merriment as he assumed the disguise, which was nothing but the encasing of himself in the spruce bark which the Trapper had peeled for the service. As we have said, the bark was from a large tree and cut nearly seven feet in length, and as it was of course slit from end to end it could be sprung open, allowing one, as it were, to enter it, and the moment one was within and the pressure was remitted, it would spring together again, thus making a veritable encasement of bark. To make them more perfectly adapted for the uses which they were to serve, the Trapper had cut here and there a hole in the body of the bark so that with a slight movement of the head the eye could survey his surroundings, even when the body was stretched prone upon the ground.

He had also, about that portion of the bark where the arms and knees came, cut away a section so that the person within could move himself in either direction at will. A more perfect concealment was surely never planned, or one less likely to attract the attention of a sentinel; for when the Trapper had encased himself in his bark armor and stretched himself on the ground, no passer-by, however on the alert he might be, could possibly have seen anything more suspicious than the trunk of a spruce log lying across his path.

"Now," said the Trapper, speaking in a whisper to his companion, as both were standing encased with the protecting bark, "the time has come for us to act. I want ye to keep along the beach — for the sand gives no noise ef ye move slow — until ye come to the edge of the camp, then do ye lie down and crawl in as far as ye can with safety but don't be resky, and remember to keep beyend the firelight. And whatever ye forgit, don't forgit to move slow. An inch a minit is a good gait in an ambushment, for it gives ye time to look and think both, and most ambushments are sp'ilt by bein' in a hurry. Lord! what a thing patience is, and how few there be that has it," muttered the Trapper. "Ef a man only knew enough to wait he could do all he undertook, for all changes be on the side of him who don't hurry.

"Now, boy," resumed the old man, "do ye keep yer eyes and ears open, and see and hear all ye can; and ef all goes well, ye'll hear the frogs croak afore a hour is passed, which do ye take as yer signal to jine me at the spot where ye hear it."

"What shall I do," whispered the Yankee, "ef anything goes wrong? Shall I fight, or run?"

"I can't tell ye, boy; no, I can't tell ye, for there's no advisin' with sartainty aforehand in sech matters," answered the Trapper. "I must leave it fer yer sense, boy, to decide, if wust comes to wust. Ef the need comes, do what seems to ye best. Fight ef ye must, but run ef ye can, fer yer legs be lengthy, and ef ye got 'em goin' on a straight line, they'd reach fer a good deal of ground, as I conceit, specially ef the vagabonds was arter ye, and a leetle powder was bein' barnt in yer rear. But whatever ye do, move slow and make no noise, and ef wust comes to wust, and anything happens to ye, they'll hear the crack of my piece from the bush back of their camp as soon as the sun shows me the sights; for the piece is here, and powder and bullets be in my pocket. Now do yer best, and may the Lord help them who be tryin' to help him. Ah, me! I shouldn't feel the need of Him so strong, I fear, ef the boy was with me to-night."

So saying, the Trapper took the roll of bark under his arm and disappeared in the woods, while the Yankee, holding the bark in which he was encased partially open in front of him, so that he could move his legs freely, started as noiselessly along the beach, walking in his stockings, as the Trapper had advised.

In the camp of the outlaws the situation was as follows: The giant sat on a log in front of the big tent, drowsy, but not asleep. The half-breed was standing motionless, leaning against a huge pine some rods fur-

ther inland, his eyes and ears alike open; a knife in his belt and a revolver at full cock in his hand. One of the outlaws was in a canoe patrolling the water in front of the camp. The gambler sat on a log gazing into the fitful flame, and now and then quietly lifting his face, and running his eyes around the limited range of vision they commanded. The three remaining outlaws were stretched on the ground sleeping soundly. Such was the situation of the camp when the Trapper and his companion began to move from different directions upon it.

The first thing that the Trapper did was to reach a position from whence he could fetch a straight line for the big tent, where leaving the bark and his rifle inside of it, he proceeded to push his investigations as to the condition of the camp as it then was. It was his hope that the outlaws had returned to the cabin, and were then outlying around it. Indeed, he felt that such was the case, for he reasoned from what he knew of the half-breed that his defeat would overcome his caution and cause him to be more eager to effect his destruction than to protect his charge. But the old man admitted to himself that such might not be the case, and that his enemy might even at that minute be within a dozen rods of him. It was, therefore, with the utmost skill that he continued to make his approach toward the tent, which he did, not by moving directly upon it, but by an oblique movement which would carry him almost parallel to the rear line of defence on which he knew sentinels — if sentinels there were — would be posted, and within a few rods of it.

The marvellous skill with which the old woodsman accomplished this, showed that he was indeed a master at the business. Inch by inch he worked his way along, his hands feeling in the darkness ahead of his advance and removing every twig and pine cone that lay in his path. Such patience in such work brings its own reward. His progress was slow, very slow, but absolutely noiseless. It was well it was so, for the old man had gone hardly the length of the line before he knew an enemy was near. The half-breed, leaning as he was against a pine, had slightly moved his shoulders against the bark, and the noise, slight as it was, had told the Trapper the whole story. He knew that his enemies were on the alert, and that he was within twenty feet of one of their sentinels.

For several minutes the old man lay and thought. Should he retire? Should he take the risk and go on? He reasoned the matter in his own mind for a moment and concluded to go on. He was successful. Slowly he drew himself along over the mosses, passed the half-breed leaning against the pine, undiscovered, and in a few moments his ear was against the canvas cover of the tent.

What did he hear? At first nothing. Then a sound, — a sound as of a person moving, — moving softly as a woman might move. The sound moved from one end of the tent to the other, backward and forward; not swiftly, but slowly; — then it stopped. The person had evidently seated — shall I say himself? shall I say herself? Was it a man? Was it a woman?

The Trapper in answer to the mental interrogation drew his knife, inwardly saying, "I'll see," and applied its point to the stout canvas. Slowly but steadily he pushed the sharp edge downward through the woven fabric, until a rent fully a foot long was made in the cloth.

The deed was done. The old man slowly sheathed the knife, and putting his fingers to the edges of the rent, prepared to draw them apart. His eye was almost at the aperture, and in another moment the secret of the tent would have been solved, when a frightful yell broke upon the air, and the Trapper knew that the Yankee was in trouble.

CHAPTER IX.

YES, the Yankee was in trouble, and trouble of a sort that might daunt any spirit less daring — or rather, let me say, less careless than his; for through every exhibition of this man's courage there ran a broad line of sheer recklessness, such as boys of pluck often show in emergencies whose actual peril they are too ignorant to appreciate. Yes; Jim Bean was in trouble. To employ an expression he used the next day in describing his sensation, he was in such peril that "he wouldn't give a last year's bean pod for his chance of gittin' eout," and yet, serious and imminent as the crisis was, his manner of meeting it was of so brave and peculiar a character as to excite admiration on the one hand and provoke laughter on the other.

It seems that on leaving the Trapper, he had for a time followed his advice and acted with great caution and not a little skill; for he had kept to the noiseless sand of the beach, advanced slowly, and made frequent pauses for observation. He had even made the last hundred feet of his approach by slow and skilful crawling, and had got to the very edge of the firelight undiscovered. Had he remained at this point and contented himself with watching the occupants of the camp, as the Trapper had charged him, all would have been well. But after lying some fifteen minutes —

which seemed an age to him — without moving an inch, he concluded in his mind to get a little nigher and see, as he inwardly expressed it, "what them ere chaps be abeout, anyheow."

For this unwise and perilous decision there was literally no justification whatever, as his then present position commanded a full view of the entire camp, at least of all he was expected to watch, and therefore could not be bettered. But if this reflection entered his mind, it had no influence upon it for he proceeded to move along the beach until he was actually in front of the gambler and not thirty feet from him. Not content with this proximity, he slowly moved himself around until the hollow bark within which he lay was end on to the camp fire, so that the light shone full into it, revealing his sandy face and gleaming eyes, and then, as if even this foolhardiness were not enough, he began to crawl directly up toward the camp fire.

It must be confessed that he acted with finest skill, and obeyed the Trapper's injunction as to the slowness of his motions with absolute faithfulness, for he did in very truth move but an "inch a minute," and so noiselessly that not a sound followed his motion. Indeed, so perfectly did he execute his perilous endeavor that he had actually crept to the rear of the gambler, and within a dozen feet of him, before the catastrophe that followed occurred. And even then his discovery was more the result of sheer accident than because of any blunder made by him. And it happened in this way:

The Yankee had, as we have said, moved inch by

inch, up even with the position of the gambler, and was now lying within his bark encasement directly back of him, and not a dozen feet away, when the man of luck suddenly arose from the log on which he had been sitting, and turned squarely around, standing back to the fire. Even then it seemed probable that the Yankee would remain undiscovered, for the hollow bark in which he lay, although clearly revealed to the gambler by the firelight, made no revelation of the secret within, for to him it was only a log. And what was there strange or startling in the fact of a spruce log lying at his feet?

It was evident that the gambler was entirely undisturbed, for after having turned his back upon the fire, he stood gazing for a moment listlessly out into the gloom beyond the illuminated circle; and as if communing with his own thoughts, began to whistle in a low, quiet tone. To one who was accidentally listening, the gambler's performance would have been most entertaining, for he whistled with great accuracy of time and liquidness of tone; and the silent air of the evening received the notes as only the still air can, — as if delighted to be ministered unto by so sweet a sound. It was evident that the man who trusted in luck was naturally gifted in the direction in which he was now exercising himself, and as is generally the case, enjoyed the exercise of his gifts, for he whistled with that self-complacency and increasing volume of sound which characterizes a performer who begins his performance from an accidental impulse, but delighted, continues to do it for his own

hearty entertainment. He whistled at first fragmentarily — a bar of this tune, and then a bar of another. Now the lively movement of a waltz, and now a statelier strain from an old solemn hymn. At last, as if he had been feeling round for something adequate, and had suddenly come upon it, he paused a moment, and then struck off with decided movement, still keeping the minor tone, the cheerful measure of the old Methodist hymn, —

> "Oh, Canaan, bright Canaan,
> I am bound for the land of Canaan,
> If you get there before I do —
> I am bound for the land of Canaan."

Before he had come to the end of the first stanza, the earnestness of his expression had decidedly increased, and when he struck off on the second stanza he did it with an emphasis of expression and an unction that would have delighted a company of earnest souls from whom was mercifully concealed the irreverence of the performer's life; for the notes came out smooth, round, and strong, and with a certain swing in the upward slide that imparted something of their own cheerful exultation to whoever might be listening. What is that strange law within us which prompts us to imitate and join in a sound which moves us profoundly? We have all felt the influence. We have all yielded to it. It is said that one singer can make a whole congregation sing. Such is the magnetism of example; such the responsiveness of sympathy.

Now, Jim Bean was a whistler himself. He was a

Methodist. He had been educated in that positive and earnest school of music which Methodism favors. He was by no means a man devoid of emotional development. Like all New England born men, memory held powerful sway over his feelings. However far or wide the Yankee roams, there is one spot and one face he never forgets. The spot and the face I need not mention; the reader can guess.

Jim Bean was a Yankee; he was away from home; he was a whistler; he was a Methodist, and being all this, what would be natural for him to do, under the circumstances?

If you are a whistler, reader, stop a moment, and whistle a strain or two of the tune yourself. Do it heartily. If you are a Methodist, and you have a whistler in your family, get him to whistle with brave and earnest expression a stanza. Let him whistle with increasing power. Let him swell the volume of his tone as he advances from word to word. Have him prolong the closing note of the lines with a strong upward movement. If you will do this, you will understand the startling occurrence to whose description I am conducting you.

What happened? This: The gambler, as we have said, had whistled in a minor tone the first stanza. He had warmed to the work as he whistled. In his earnestness, and the absent-mindedness which accompanies strong feeling and leads one to incongruous action, not only had he whistled, but he had begun to beat the measure with his foot, and had actually taken a pack

of cards from his pocket and was shuffling them in perfect time with the swinging measure of the cheerful strain. And when he struck into the first line of the second stanza, after having ended the refrain of the previous verse with a triumphant flourish of sound, he was going it with an unction and positiveness of expression that made it unresistible to one whose nature and training exposed him to the pressure of such a temptation.

It is not certain that poor Bean intended to whistle. It is doubtful if he himself knew when he began to whistle; but begin he did, — mentally at first, doubtless; but the movement of the brain descended to the mouth, communicated its vibrations to the tongue, and ran its tuneful contractions around the lips. But no matter how the terrible result was reached, it *was* reached; for, before the gambler had gone half way through the second line of the second stanza, Jim Bean joined in the tune, — somewhat timidly at first, but with growing earnestness as he proceeded, and by the time the gambler had come to the refrain the Yankee was going it at the full strength of his whistling capacity, and the lines

> "Oh, praise the Lord, I'm coming too,
> I'm bound for the land of Canaan!"

were delivered with a volume of sound that astonished even the gambler.

Still the Yankee had whistled in such perfect time and with such concerted action, that beyond the over-

whelming increase of sound there was not the least intimation conveyed to the gambler's mind that he had been accompanied. It is true that he paused a moment at the end of the refrain. Perhaps he looked at the log. Perhaps he listened. He certainly stopped shuffling the pack; his face wore a puzzled expression; for an instant he even looked around as if to note if any one was watching him. Then he said "Pshaw!" and struck off with a rush into a repetition of the second stanza, as if he would repeat the enjoyment he had received, while foot and cards renewed their measured motion.

Nor was our friend Bean behind time. The refrain had fairly warmed him to his work, and the first note that poured from the gambler's lips, found him ready and waiting. It is doubtful if the gambler was ever "assisted" with greater heartiness, for the Yankee let out with his full strength. Indeed, he overdid the thing. Perhaps his tones were by nature stronger than the gambler's; perhaps the curvature of the hollow bark, in which he lay, added to the volume of the resonance. Be that as it may, by the time he had come to the refrain the gambler was fully aware that he had a partner in the game he was playing, and that the partner was far from being a "dummy."

The gambler was not only aware of it, but the knowledge was of so startling a character that even his supreme coolness was for once disturbed, and his system received something nigh, at least, to a shock. He came to a full stop. But the Yankee was too far

advanced in feeling, and too wrapt in the energy of his own performance, to even know that his leader had paused. It is doubtful whether if he had, it would have put any check to his tuneful career, for onward he swept into the refrain, at a pace which carried everything before it. The hollow encasement resounded with noise. The fibres of the bark fairly quivered with the penetrating melody. The notes poured out of either extremity in a torrent. The performance was, indeed, of a most astonishing character. The gambler was thoroughly bewildered. He looked at the log, from whose bulk the tune was being poured, with astonishment. He never suspected the trick, and yet he knew that something was wrong. Was it in himself? No. He knew he was wide awake. He was a determined man — quick to decide, quick to act; — fearless. He took half a dozen steps forward; they brought him within reach of the bark. He drew back his foot.

"Devil take the log," he said, and kicked it.

The toe of his boot penetrated the bark, and struck square against Jim Bean's ribs.

The yell which the poor fellow poured forth upon the air was fierce and prolonged enough to startle even the bravest. The outlaws asleep by the fire sprang bewildered and frightened, to their feet. The gambler recoiled a step, surprised at the terrible revelation his kick had caused. The bark lifted one end of itself — stood up erect — moved toward him — began to open. Then a voice said, —

"Hit a man in the ribs, will yeou, for whistlin' a

tune; darn yeou — take that." And a fist shot out of the opening directly at the gambler's face; while the bark, thrown backward by the motion, fell with a crash to the ground; and the Yankee, wrathful and ready for fight, stood revealed in the firelight.

It was of the nature of the highest proof of the gambler's coolness in emergencies, that he escaped the terrible blow that the Yankee had aimed at him; but he did escape it, warding it with a motion so quick and skilful that it afforded full evidence both of his self-possession and his knowledge of the manly art.

The instant that the bark fell away from around the Yankee's body, thus leaving him fully exposed to the eyes of the outlaws, they recognized him as the man who had come to the Trapper's assistance the night before, and by whose efforts they had been thwarted in their murderous designs, and with a yell of fierce delight rushed in a body upon him. But the Bean blood was up, and the reckless courage of the Down-Easter aroused. The first one that came within reach he met with a kick in the stomach that doubled him up with sudden pain. But, unfortunately for him, he had put such force into the kick and delivered it at so long a range, that it upset his own equilibrium, and when his other two assailants came against him he was unable to recover his balance in time to save himself, and was only able, as he rolled upon the ground, to drag them both with him.

It was not until he was thus engaged in a rough and tumble contest, and was rolling over and over on the

ground in desperate grapple with his antagonists, that the injunction of the Trapper to run if he could and not fight, occurred to him. It was then, too, that he remembered the signal agreed upon — the hoot of an owl as a note of danger, and the bark of a fox, to give the direction of his flight, if he had to run for it. But faithful to his promise, no sooner did he recall the agreement with the Trapper than he strove to fulfil it. It is certain that no owl ever sounded such a cry upon the night air as the Yankee, in attempted imitations of the lonely call, poured out of his mouth as he grappled with the outlaws.

In vain did the gambler strive to help his companions. The contestants were in too rapid motion and too inextricably mingled to be separated or even distinguished in the darkness; for as they fought they had rolled away from the firelight toward the water, and were already almost indistinguishable in the gloom. In a moment the Yankee, by a lucky motion, recovered his feet, and unmindful of the Trapper's direction, darted away, while he poured out of his mouth a series of barks and owl cries, which proved both his entire incapacity to imitate the sounds, and his determination to make up in extra energy of expression for the time he had lost in executing the signals. But unfortunately for him, in his confusion, he had mistaken the direction of the boat, and instead of taking the course he should have done, he ran directly through the camp and actually into the arms of the giant!

The old Trapper had not been idle. Brief as the

struggle on the beach had been, he too had been called upon to act. When the cry of his companion had first sounded, and the terrible uproar arose around the camp fire, he was lying, as we have described, by the big tent, in the act of putting his eye to the rent he had cut in the canvas. Of course the yell of the Yankee had put a stop to his investigations. He had even moved several feet away from the tent, and lying on the ground in the darkness, was listening for the movement of the man whom he had crept past, and who he knew was somewhere in the darkness back of him. Nor had he long to wait. In an instant the rush of feet was heard, and the old man knew he was coming. The giant had risen and even advanced several rods toward the centre of the camp, whence the noise of the conflict came.

The old Trapper was thus in the rear of all the occupants of the camp except the sentinel, whose swift approach he could plainly hear. As he passed the old man in the darkness, an arm was suddenly thrust out, and he was pitched headlong to the ground; and before he could even cry out a hand had him by the neck and a grasp was fastened on his throat that effectually prevented his giving an alarm. Thus the man lay on the ground, and the Trapper by his side with his hand on his throat. If the Trapper had only known it was the half-breed he thus held in his grasp!

The Yankee, as we have said, confused and mistaking the right direction, had run into the very arms of the giant.

The velocity with which he was running when the collision with his enemy occurred, was sufficient to make the shock a terrible one to both. Indeed, it nearly knocked the breath out of their bodies. Both recovered themselves at the same instant; and both, thoroughly enraged, sprang upon each other with the ferocity of wild animals. The Yankee was nearly as tall as the giant, and what he lacked in strength was at least partially made up by his greater agility. For a minute the contestants tore about, this way and that, through the darkness, like a whirlwind. Twice they fell to the ground, and twice they arose, — only to renew their deadly embrace. As they fought, other forms appeared in the gloom; and the Trapper, who was still lying on the ground with his hand on the throat of the half-breed, felt that the crisis had come, and that now, if ever, he must aid his companion. In an instant the moment for him to act came. The giant had, by the exercise of his terrible strength, fairly tossed the Yankee into the air, and when he struck the ground he landed in the very midst of the outlaws and the gambler, who were standing as spectators of the terrible encounter.

The Yankee, feeling that all were his enemies, and careless as to whom he fought with; his Down East grit fairly aroused, no sooner struck the ground, than he laid hold of as many as he could sweep within his embrace, and pouring a torrent of owl hoots, cat calls, and fox barks out of his mouth, started with an outlaw under either arm, in full tilt for the beach: him the others followed. The giant, slowest to move, last.

This was the Trapper's opportunity. With a farewell pinch at the throat his fingers encircled, he arose to his feet, and before the giant had taken two strides, a hand fell heavily on his shoulder, and a power equal to his own spun him around on his feet and a voice said,—

"The boy has enough arter him. Try me."

The contest which followed cannot be described. It was the struggle of two men, both of enormous strength, and neither of whom had ever been thrown. The contestants were in deadly earnest from the start. There were no feints, — no tricks of fence; no scientific delays. They grappled each other with that directness of attack warranted by their knowledge of their strength and inspired by unquestioning courage. The Trapper was the more agile of the two, and prudence would have suggested that he prolong the contest, and add to his chances by wrestling at arm's length; but either from fear that his opponent might receive reenforcement if he delayed, or because he disdained to avail himself of the least natural advantage, he met the giant breast to breast, in the deadly lock known as the "back hold," their knuckles in each other's spine, and their bodies braced. It was a square test — muscle against muscle, bone against bone, grit against grit. For thirty seconds neither yielded; — not a quiver in either frame; no slacking of the terrible tension. Then the end came. A spasm ran through the body of the Trapper's monstrous antagonist. His clasped hands loosened, unlocked, fell to his side; his form lost its stiffness, yielded to the old man's hug, doubled

backward, and, as the Trapper let go his hold, the huge body of his foe fell, in a limp heap, to the ground.

At the same instant a yell of triumph sounded from the beach; and the Trapper knew that the Yankee was a captive.

"The vagabonds have got the boy!" he muttered. For a moment he stood listening. He even drew his knife. But wiser counsel prevailed: he drove it back into its sheath, saying, "I'll settle with the varmints when the sun shows me the sights;" and then he turned on his heel and plunged into the woods.

CHAPTER X.

SEVEN miles down the river from the lake is a flight of rapids. For a mile and a half the current tears its way down a declivity paved with jagged rocks and lined roughly on either side with angular ledges. Here and there the river widens and a pool sleeps all the day in the sunlight. But for the most part, through the whole distance the water pushes angrily against the opposing boulders; or, finding freedom, glides swiftly over the smooth rock bottom, which slopes sharply down, quivering with the swiftness of its motion. At the foot of the rapids the stream empties itself into a basin, broad, deep, and long. A huge ledge on the eastern side juts out into the depths. Back of this and down the stream, a green lawn widens, on the northern side of which, a huge rock stands — a natural camp; and many a boat has rested in the basin, many a fisher cast from the ledge his flies, and many a camp-fire has burnt at the base of the rock.

Was it dawn? Had morning come? A man rose from the earth on which he had been sleeping, stretched himself, glanced upward at the sky, then toward the eastern mountain, interrogating nature. It was yet dark, no light abroad. He thrust his foot against some brands, and as they came into conjunction they generously joined their heat, and from the ashes a flame shot

upward, lighting the great rock, the plat of green grass, and the watcher's face. I need not introduce him to the reader of these tales. It was Herbert; Henry Herbert, on his way to the old Trapper's camp.

For a moment he stood gazing into the brands. His boat, from under which he had crept when he arose, lay a few feet back of him. A glance at its bottom revealed the fact that it had recently met with an accident, for a piece of tin had been tacked to the sheathing, to which putty and white lead both had been plentifully applied. The young man turned about, and as his eyes fell on the mended portion, he said, —

"Confound the snag; if it hadn't been for that I would have reached the cabin last evening. I don't understand why I feel as I do, but I wish I had run in last night. It is the first time I have dreamed for a year. I dreamed that the dogs were dead, and John Norton chased out of the woods. What a funny idea! They say dreams go by contraries. I hope they do. But still I don't see what made me dream."

The young man paused a moment, took four or five steps away from the fire and then came back and added, —

"It is not the dream, either; it's something *beside* that, — an uneasy feeling. I don't understand it. I think I saw a thousand John Nortons and a thousand dogs running for life last night. Heavens! to think the old man is in danger, and I sleeping here only seven miles away. Pshaw! it's all imagination, born of ill digestion. I guess I ate a little strong on the

carry," and the young man laughed to himself at the remembrance of the meal, at which, it must be confessed, he had done ample justice to his appetite, begotten by the northern air and twenty miles of vigorous rowing. "Ah! there it comes!" alluding, as he spoke, to the thinnest possible film of light that had spread itself, even while he had been standing by the fire, over the clouds. "There it comes," he added. "Yes; the mountain line shows less darkly. The morning is most here, and I will be on the carry in half an hour."

He threw some more wood on the fire burning at the base of the rock, and carefully unrolling a blanket, he drew out of it a double rifle, — the favorite piece, — the match to the Trapper's, already known to the reader; and he looked at it admiringly, renewed the caps, and wiped the tubes with the buckskin patch tied round the stock, tried the locks and the set, — not as if inspecting it, but as if it was a delight to look at the weapon he loved so well, and hear the working of its parts come sharply to his ear. So he busied himself a moment; then he laid it down upon the blanket, and went to the river to wash. He plunged his head into the cool waters clear to the neck; then lifted his face and shook the water from his hair and laughed as a child at play; dipped and laughed three times, as if the tide had washed from out his memory the recollection of all cares and troubles, and all duties that bring these, and he were but a healthy boy, happy in his careless independence. Perhaps it were well if all of us, who carry

burdens such as life burdens us with, should find that cooling tide, and dip our heads into it and laugh as happily.

Then, cooled with that delicious coolness that a head bath brings to the circulation when taken in a secluded spot in the cool dawn, he returned to the fire, gathered a bough of balsam, placed it on the coals, and thrust his nose into the smoke to smell it; then hemlock followed; then pine growing nigh; then cedar.

"Yes," he said, "all are good, for the scent of the Lord is in them, as the old Trapper says; but the cedar is the sweetest. Its soft vapor absolutely feels cool as it rolls up into the face. And what delicious pungency the nose inhales! Why do those with senses live in cities? Is it because they know so little of odor, and think that the ear and the eye are the chief avenues by which pleasure can come to man?"

Thus, talking to himself, the young man waited for the coming light — waited impatiently; but nature never hurries. Beautiful as she is, serviceable as she is, she has no sympathy. We chafe at her tardiness, but she never quickens her step. We regret her haste, but she continues her speed. Whether we be happy and call her swift, or whether we be anxious and upbraid her tardiness, she changes neither her mood nor her motion. Her light is the same whether it shines on cradle or grave; and the glory of her brightness is poured with equal energy on those who welcome it, and those who hide from its coming.

We say the young man waited impatiently, but still

with a certain philosophy mingled with his impatience; for as he waited he took a stick, and with it hung a little kettle over the flame, and when the water boiled he set the kettle in the warm ashes, sprinkled in some leaves of the tea and watched it as it steeped; then he took some biscuit from his pocket, a small roll of jerked venison, and on these made his frugal repast. He closed the meal with pouring the steeped tea into his drinking cup, and having cooled it to his taste he said, —

"I drink John Norton's health. May the morning find him as it finds me: well, happy, and at peace." He said this quaintly, with a look of half gravity and half jest. Perhaps his dream troubled him; perhaps the exuberance of his feelings prompted the half serious and half jocular act. If he had known where John Norton was at that moment!

The morning light was now abroad. The sky showed itself. Even the woods were surrendering their gloom. The trail that led round the rapids was plain, at least, to a trained eye. The young man adjusted his baggage, tossed the boat, across which the yoke was resting, upon his shoulders, gave one look around the camp-fire to see if aught was forgotten, and with his rifle in his left hand, his right balancing the boat, he broke away almost at a run on the trail that led around the rapids. He reached the other end, breathed himself a moment, then stepped quickly in and shoved the light craft away. His oars took the water strongly. The boat jumped ahead under the sharp stroke. It turned the curves as

true as if a coxswain steered it. It took the long straight reaches as if running by a compass line. It whirled round the bends as if the force of steam pushed it along. The oarsman warmed to his work. He threw off his boating shirt. The beads of sweat stood on his face and neck. He lengthened his stroke to his extremest reach. The boat seemed to share his energy, and raced onward as if itself were vital.

What a splendid exhibition of strength and happy exercise the oarsman gave as round the bends, up the straight reaches, and underneath the overhanging maples of the Racquette, he raced along, while the sun kindled in the east, and the clouds that hung lazily overhead turned into floating flame.

Half the distance from the rapids to the lake, and more than half had been covered, and the young man was pulling a stroke that only an oarsman pulls when he has got his "second wind"; a stroke that was getting all the speed out of the boat that it was capable of showing, when, even as his oars were in mid-stroke, he suddenly threw his chest forward upon the handles.

The boat stopped ere it had gone its length. The oarsman was on his feet in an instant, rifle in hand, eye intent, and face almost sharpened with intensity of listening.

"I heard them whine," he said; "I'd bet my life 'twas" —

A bay of hounds; a cry loud, joyous and prolonged, swelled out of the margin of the marsh, not fifty rods from where, balanced in his boat, he stood. Then silence.

Another cry, louder, more joyous, prolonged with many a repeated bay! The cry of dogs, glad with a sudden and overwhelming surprise as of a master's return, broke like the clash of a chime of bells, hurriedly rung, upon the morning air.

The young man standing in the boat never stirred an inch. His eye searched the edges of the banks and the neighboring balsam thicket, as if to discover the explanation of the mystery. He knew the dogs. He knew that they were tied, or held stationary by something more dreadful than a leash. The muscles round his mouth tightened. Perhaps a shade of pallor showed at its corners. He seated himself, laid his rifle down, backed the boat into the mouth of the creek, shoved it round the first bend, seized his rifle, and stepped ashore; then, with a swinging stride, struck in a straight line toward the whimpering hounds. He reached the balsam thicket,—beyond which, by what charm or force held he knew not, the hounds remained steadfastly,—and stopped, his face white with sudden terror. The hounds, whimpering, held their place. The young man suddenly reached out his hand, and, grasping a young tamarack, steadied himself. An awful thought had come to him. Why were the hounds there, miles from the cabin, in a season when they were not allowed to run? Why did they keep their station with his scent strong in their nose, and wild as they were in their glad welcoming? The young man could think of but one answer. That answer was of so awful a sort that it filled him with a deadly faint.

Was John Norton dead? Were the hounds guarding his body? If he should break through the balsam thicket what would he see? For a moment, we say, he stood steadying himself by the tamarack, then he braced himself, moved resolutely on, and with the feeling of one breaking into an awful presence, broke through the balsam thicket and stopped.

The hounds tied to the pine. Nothing else!

"Thank God!"

It was all he said—'twas all he could say; for as he said it, he dropped upon his knees and putting his arms round the hounds' necks, kissed them, in his joy.

For a moment he thus knelt with his arms round their necks, then he rose and scanned the signs. The hounds tied, the dish not yet empty of food, the leash long enough to permit the hounds to reach the water, —yes, 'twas all plain; he read the story as if written in a book.

"The old man is in danger," he said, "he was fearful that the hounds would be killed; he brought them here for safety, the food is not all eaten, and the dogs are full. It wasn't twenty-four hours ago. But what danger threatens him? Has that half-breed from the north come down with his gang, and are they round his cabin now? It can't be. I heard no shot last night, and even now the fogs have lifted so that lead might be sent effectively."

That instant a rifle cracked sudden and sharp, miles to the south.

"My God," he said, "'tis his!" And the young man

tore through the thicket, and raced through the marsh grass with a foot swift as a deer's, and face fairly aflame.

He reached his boat, shoved down the creek, out upon the easy flowing river; then set himself a stroke and pulled it so sharp and quick that the oars bent and the boat jumped like a frightened thing.

A mile from the lake he shipped his oars, and with his paddle pressed the boat softly up against a ledge which projected into the stream, stepped out upon it, lifted the shell in his arms and bore it back into the woods to where a bunch of cedars stood, thrust it under the drooping branches, and seizing his rifle struck for the Trapper's cabin.

In ten minutes he was near the edge of the clearing. Then he paused to breathe himself and listen. Where was the Trapper? In the cabin? Perhaps. Then his enemies were probably outlying around it, and he would soon be in their midst. He must ambush the ambushment. He crept. He crawled. He circled the clearing. Not a sound could he hear: not a man discover. The cabin door was shut. Was any one within? How could he tell? Certainly none were without. Signs were plenty: footprints by the spring; footprints on the beach, — not the Trapper's. In the bush, as he was crawling, he found a knife. The blade had blood on it. He stuck it in his belt, and crept on. He reached the corner of the cabin, — listened. No sound. Crawled around to the door. Put his ear to the threshold. No sound. Knocked. No answer. Looked

at the door a moment. Tried the latch. Lifted it. And then with both barrels of his rifle cocked, pushed it open and stepped quickly in.

Empty? Certainly. The young man saw that at a glance. He saw more. He saw the singed skins, the burnt blankets, a broken chair, and said aloud, —

"There's been a fight here." Then he closed the door, and seated himself.

For ten minutes, perhaps, he remained thus thinking. Where was the Trapper? What should he do next? What is that? Was not that a man's step he heard? Assuredly. Somebody was coming up the walk. The unknown came on, — halted. Came on again. He was now at the door. Then a knock was delivered on the stout panel. The young man never moved. He simply lifted his rifle to his eye, and waited. Another knock; then the door was suddenly pushed in, and a man, with a cocked revolver in his hand, stood on the threshold.

"If you lift your right hand, you're a dead man." That was all Herbert said.

The man in the door was of medium size. He never moved a muscle. He looked coolly into the muzzles of the rifle, not eight feet from his head, then at the face. whose cheek was on the stock, and said, —

"All right. Ask your questions."

Then Herbert said: —

"Who are you?"

"A detective," answered the man.

"Whom do you want?"

"John Norton," was the reply.

"What for?"

"To help me in the name of the law," was the answer.

"Lay your pistol on the table — careful," said Herbert. The man complied. Then he said, —

"Who are *you?*"

"Henry Herbert."

The man's face lighted.

"Mr. Herbert, I know you. You are John Norton's friend. I've heard of you. It's all right. Here's my commission. Read it. I'll place my hands on the door, flat, while you look it over. You needn't cover me with your rifle longer, the muzzles make me uneasy." And the man laughed.

Herbert glanced the paper over, uncocked his rifle — rose, extended his hand to the stranger, saying, —

"I've heard of *you*, Mr. Carson. I'm glad to meet you." And the two shook hands heartily. "What can we do? Where is John Norton? Sit down. Let me tell you what I know."

The two men seated themselves, and Henry told the detective his story: where he had camped the night before; how he had come upon the hounds on his way up, who had scented him as he was passing; how he had heard the rifle shot, and knew it was the Trapper's; how he had ambushed the cabin, and entered; pointed out to the detective the signs of fire and battle which the bedding, the skins, and the furniture made; showed the knife, with the bloody blade, he had found in the bush; and as he ended, he said, —

"Now, what I wish to know is, where is John Norton?"

"I think," replied the detective, "I can help you. You heard his rifle. Well, 'twas to the south, here away. There has been a fight here: the old man has won. *I know who fought him*," and the detective looked steadily into Herbert's eyes.

"Who?"

"The very gang I am after. I have followed them from Canada. They have something I want — no matter what, I will tell you the story another time. I tracked them into the woods and lost their trail on upper Saranac. No one had seen them. A guide — he was half drunk — told me that if I wanted to find anything in the woods, that the devil himself couldn't find, all I had to do was to find John Norton first. Of course I have heard of him. I took the hint; and as Wild Bill — that was the fellow's name — told me the old man had his cabin here, I started for this lake. It was well I did. John Norton is here. You heard his piece, and the gang I am following is here, also. I feel confident of it. See the points of the case. The old man has run against them, and suspected them. They suspected him. Hence the collision. They fought him in his cabin here. He won. How, God knows, I don't. For there are seven, all told, and desperate chaps as ever dirked a man. But beaten them he has. He has followed them. Their camp is somewhere on this lake, and John Norton, Mr. Herbert, is watching round that camp this minute." And the detective sprang to his feet with his eyes blazing.

Herbert rose too. He touched the detective on the arm, and said, —

"Come out here." He walked to the bank that overlooked the lake, the other following.

Then he said, looking the detective in the face, —

"You said John Norton is on this lake?"

"I did," answered the detective.

"I think so too," answered Herbert. "If he is on this lake and alive, he will be here within an hour, unless he is captured."

"What do you mean?" asked the detective.

"I mean this," Herbert replied; and the right barrel, resting in the hollow of his right arm, exploded at the word.

An instant, and then the left followed, with its sharp report.

The two men listened until the echoes died away in the ravines far up the mountains, and then Herbert said, —

"If living and unbound, you will see John Norton within an hour. Here is a log. We will wait," and the two men seated themselves.

While this had been transpiring at the hunter's cabin, they were having a lively time at the camp on the Point.

CHAPTER XI.

THE Trapper, as we have narrated, heard the yell of the outlaws which proclaimed that the Yankee was a prisoner, and plunged into the woods. He went but a few rods, for the friendly gloom was his all-sufficient protection, and he was anxious to ascertain the fate of his companion. He even partly retraced his steps that he might the better hear the conversation of his enemies and thereby learn their plans.

In a few moments the four outlaws and the gambler, with the Yankee tightly bound in their midst, came up from the beach anxiously looking for the half-breed and the giant, whose absence seemed to them unaccountable. They found them both lying almost side by side and both of them in a dazed condition. The half-breed slowly recovered his senses and explained how he had been dealt with, and by whom. For well did he know whose skill had eluded his watchfulness and whose hand had set its grip on his throat.

"John Norton has been here," he said, with a bitter oath. "He crawled into the heart of the camp here, passing under my very nose, and I did not see him. He has come and gone as if we were boys. He it is that nearly strangled me, and the giant there can tell you the rest."

The monstrous being thus alluded to staggered to his

feet, a groan escaping from him as he made the effort, and leaning against a tree for support, said, —

"The man is a devil. I had the under hold and yet he broke my back. Kunnel, I'm no good after this. Give me a boat, and I will get out of the woods." His spirit was evidently crushed and his rude courage — born of a confidence in his immense physical strength — broken.

"Look here," said the gambler, and he spoke in a cheerful, encouraging tone. "The luck has run against us so far, but the cards show in our favor, and for the first time I feel confidence in the game. Just look at the cards: we've got one, and we'll get the other to-morrow, if we don't get foolish and play wildly. Let's go to the fire, and decide what's to be done. Here, two of you stay by the tent, and keep your eyes about you, too. The man is in the bush somewhere, and in earnest; but I'm in earnest, too, and John Norton lets us alone after this or he dies, that's all there is about it, — if I have to kill him myself. Two of you stay here and shoot at the first sound you hear. The rest come with me."

So saying, he led the way to the centre of the camp, whither the others followed, leading the Yankee, whose hands were tightly tied to his side.

The council that followed was long and earnest. The half-breed and the gambler were for the first time thoroughly united in purpose; and the wits of both put in conjunction to accomplish one thing — the capture or destruction of the Trapper.

It was morning. The sun had risen, but the fog, that swathed the lake and the lake shore, resisted the incoming of his beams. Not until the rising heat had warmed the mountain sides, and currents of air began to move, did the fog give evidence of retreat. But then a panic seemed to seize it: the fleecy mass began to heave here and there and local agitations to occur. For an instant the fleecy field was split, and a lane of narrow width ran clean from shore to shore, showing the blue water and the distant beach. Then the great mass began to roll. The sun here and there shone for an instant through the rising mass of vapor. Gradually he won his way against the obstacles that night had heaved damply up in his path, and the delivered water and the freed shores greeted his coming with ripples and movement of waving boughs.

There was a man crouched back of a boulder in the rear of the outlaws' camp who, with eyes that had never closed, and with ears strained with intense effort of hearing, had, through the hours of the night, waited patiently for the coming of the day. That man was John Norton, the Trapper.

It was his eye that first saw the new shade of color come to the fog that hung heavily over the lake; his eye noted the first movement amid the mist, and greeted the light with bright and eager anticipation. He was not a man to desert a comrade, and it was evident, by the look on his face, that if any harm had come to the Yankee, some of the vagabonds, as he mentally expressed it, would have to answer for it.

All humor — and his face was capable of expressing infinite humor — all amiable expression, and the sweet peacefulness that had become habitual, in the later years, to his countenance, had departed, and in their place the face showed, in the morning light, a set and rigid look. The lines were taut around the mouth, and the eyes that looked out from under the heavy eyebrows, gleamed hard and cold as steel. One man against seven. One man under cover in a position that commanded the whole camp, unless the occupants lay close, with a rifle in his hand, waiting for the coming light; waiting for a man to show his head.

Well did those in the camp know what the light would bring, for the half-breed, in the council held in the night, had told the gambler that when the sun arose John Norton would have the whole camp within range of his piece, and that to show a head or even a hand would be dangerous. Each man held his place, therefore, armed and ready for fight. The gambler, with a pistol in his hand — the one he had used in his match with the Trapper on the beach — stood at the edge of the beach back of a huge pine, the others, each behind his own protection, lay crouched or stood, according to the necessities of his position.

The Yankee was near the centre of the camp in plain view to all; his body lashed at the shoulders to a dead tamarack, and his hands tied to the tree likewise. It must be confessed that he presented a laughable spectacle, thus trussed up as it were. His back was toward the lake. Perhaps his enemies had placed him so, that

he might not see what was going on in the camp. Be that as it may, his face faced the woods and commanded an easy view of John Norton himself, as he crouched back of his protecting boulder. Such was the position of the several parties when the sun broke triumphantly through the fog, which, up to that moment, had made objects twenty feet distant invisible.

A glance told the Trapper the condition of the camp, and the position of every one of his enemies. His mind, quick to decide, and full of expedients gathered by years of experience in similar emergencies, reached its conclusions in a moment, and prompted him to do one of those unexpected and reckless things which, done by any other man, would be his death, but which done by one like him, must, by the coolest judgment, be pronounced the only way to success. But first he would learn the condition of his captured companion.

"Boy," he said, speaking in a full, steady tone, easily heard through the camp; "boy," he said, "have the vagabonds tetched a hair of yer head?"

"Not a hair," answered Jim Bean. "Every hair, old man, is in the right place, stiff as ever, darn ef it ain't!"

The Yankee had evidently, amid his tribulations, retained both the reckless carelessness of his spirit and the rough humor of his expression.

"It is well," answered the Trapper. "It is well that the dogs have left ye untetched; for ef they had hurt a hair of yer head, their blood would have answered for it. It is years sence I've felt as I do this mornin';

and ef the vagabonds want lead, lead they can have. Now, boy, do as I tell ye, and a man who cares nothing for his life this mornin' will show ye a trick that ye'll remember when ye be gone from the woods. The vagabonds be fools to tie a man of yer inches to a tree whose roots the fire has barnt under."

The old man paused a moment; he drew his knife, holding its handle in his left hand so that it was little impeded in the use which a rapid shot would demand of it, meditated a moment, glanced at the caps and the tubes of his rifle, and then he said, calling loud and clear, —

"Who be the spokesman of this camp? Ef there be a man ye sneaks can trust to speak for ye, let him make himself known."

And then after a moment's pause, he repeated, —

"Who be the spokesman of this camp?"

For an instant there was no reply, and then the gambler, from his position behind the pine some fifty yards distant, directly in front of the Trapper, said, —

"I make this deal, old man; if you want to cut, say so!"

"Ay, ay," answered the Trapper clearly and sharply, "I know yer voice, and well it is that two feet of good pine is atween ye and the line of my lead, for ye have consorted with the wicked in their wickedness, and the punishment of the wicked must rest on yer head. It is well that ye speak for the vagabonds, for ye had a leetle playfulness with me one day, and ye know that my bullets go quick and go straight.

And here I say that I know the position of every one of ye, and my eye takes ye all in; and ef one of ye shows yer head, or enough of yer skull to match the width of a bullet, it will be matched with a bullet, for I have something to do — so keep yer heads and yer hands out of sight, or ye will lose head or hand. There be seven agin one, but the two of the seven that lift from yer covers fust be dead men. That will leave but five and the chances."

"What do you propose to do?" asked the gambler coolly, from behind the pine.

"This," answered the Trapper. And as the word escaped his lips, he leaped the boulder behind which he was crouched, and landed lightly as a cat on his feet in full view, knife in hand, and rifle at a poise ready to shoot.

"Now," he yelled, "show a head, show a hand, ef ye dare!"

The action was so quick, so unexpected, so startlingly bold, the outlaws, and the gambler himself, were appalled. Their dreaded enemy was on the margin of their camp, and the dreaded rifle had every position under its muzzles.

Not an instant did the Trapper lose. No sooner had he given the warning, than he said to the Yankee, who was standing lashed to the tree, with his mouth fairly open in astonishment at the Trapper's sudden appearance, —

"Boy, bend yerself forrard, and sot yer strength on to the roots as ef ye was liftin' a ton."

The Yankee's mouth, as we have said, was open; it closed. The expression which came to his face was that of quickest intelligence. The look of a man who understands the reason of what he has been told to do, and is mortified that he had not thought of it before. His feelings were of the strongest kind beyond doubt, for the expression with which he eased himself of them was the most earnest in his vocabulary. He said, —

"I sweow!"

And then bowing himself forward, while the roots cracked at his feet, he put the full force of his body to the effort he was called upon to make. He lifted it slowly, for the roots hung, but liberty was ahead, and an uncertain fate behind him. Every ounce of power that was anywhere lying around in the entire length of his ungainly proportions, he put into the effort. The cords cut into his wrists until the blood started, but, grit to the last, he never flinched. The last root finally yielded to the strain that he put upon it, and Jim Bean, with the tree whose top reached twenty feet above his head, stood ready for the next move.

The old Trapper took a step; — one motion of his knife, and the cords were severed. The tree fell with a crash and Jim Bean was free.

"Scoot, boy," said the Trapper; "use yer legs; head fer the boat beyend the big pine, and ef anything happens, make for the Saranacs."

"Not this year, old man; ef there is any wrastlin' goin' on here this mornin' Jim Bean is jest goin' to sidle into it! There is a chap that kicked me in the

ribs last night jest for whistlin' a little tune, and I want to get my paw on him a minute."

"Boy," said the Trapper, "ye be foolish. Make use of yer legs, and show the Lord by yer runnin' that ye be grateful for yer deliverance!"

"I go when you go, old man," said the Yankee; "we came into this camp together, and we go out together. We boss this town meetin' between us, and when you say adjourn we'll adjourn, and not be——"

The word was drowned in the explosion of the Trapper's rifle. While the Yankee had been talking, the muzzle of a duelling pistol had been pushed slowly from behind the pine. The quick eye of the Trapper had caught the movement; and before the muzzles had gotten the line his piece cracked its report out, and a pistol, struck square in the muzzle by the bullet, was knocked from the hand that held it, twenty feet into the air, and fell muzzle foremost into the sand.

"Ye have got yer lesson," said the Trapper, "ye have got yer lesson, and it will help ye to credit the words that I tell ye. There's one bullet left, and ef there be one of ye that wants to die in the next twenty seconds, let him lift his head from his cover."

So saying, the old man backed his way out of the camp, until he came to the cover of the trees, behind one of which he glided, the Yankee taking another.

"Here I be, ye vagabonds!" shouted the Trapper, as he drove a bullet into the empty barrel with a single motion of the rod. "Here I be," he repeated, "one man agin seven, and the trees of the Lord for a kiver,

Come out, and show yerselves, and prove yerselves to be better than sneaks. I come to this P'int for a parpose, and I don't go from this P'int till I find out ye devilments, unless the Lord" —

The sentence was never ended. To the north a rifle cracked. The report cut through the atmosphere like a bullet. The old man flung a hand into the air, while his face showed the look of a hound who has suddenly heard the motions of his game.

Quick, alert, eager. Had he been chiselled in marble, his posture could not have been steadier, or his pose more rigidly held. An instant, and then a rifle cracked again, — a twin report to the one that had preceded it.

The old man dashed the hand that was still suspended in the air to his side, and with a voice whose sound was between a sob and a laugh, exclaimed, —

"Henry! To the boat! To the boat! The boy and the rifle be both in the woods!"

And then, as if the swiftness of his youth had returned to his frame, the old man, with his rifle at a trail and his white hair streaming behind him, followed by his companion, who strove vainly to match his velocity, tore wildly toward the boat.

Thus, as we have described in a preceding chapter, Henry and the detective sat on the log on the bank overlooking the lake. After Henry had said, when the rifle sounded its report, "If John Norton be on this lake alive and unbound, he will be here within an

hour," neither had spoken. The mind of the one was filled with foreboding; the mind of the other with doubt. Their eyes now surveyed the waters, and now ran their glances around the shores, and then were turned searchingly toward the limits of the clearing in which the cabin stood.

Thus were they seated, silently watching. Suddenly a boat shot out from the shore, coming into view from behind a projection that stretched outward into the lake. A boat with two men in it; one of them paddling.

"'Tis he," Henry exclaimed, in a voice that showed both his excitement and the impressive nature of his feelings. "'Tis he, strong and well. I know his stroke," and the young man rose to his feet, walked a few steps from the log on the edge of the bank, and, with his back to his companion, began to reload his rifle. The detective remained quietly where he was sitting until his companion had returned, and then he said, —

"Mr. Herbert, you seem to love the man."

"He is as my father," was the response.

Nothing more was said. The boat drew rapidly on, and as it neared the beach, Henry went down to meet it, his rifle in his hand and his head uncovered. Once the old Trapper, while yet some rods from the shore, intermitted his stroke, and, shading his eyes with one hand, gazed fixedly at the figure on the beach.

"The boy looks thin," he said, and then he resumed his stroke. In a moment the boat touched the beach, and the Trapper, with his rifle in his hand, stepped

ashore, and the young man and the old one stood face to face.

For a moment they looked at each other with the look with which love notes the changes that distance and time have wrought since its parting, and then the old man extended his hand, and as the younger took it in his own, he said, —

"It be pleasant to look upon yer face on the 'arth ag'in, Henry. I trust the Lord has been good to ye sence we parted."

"I have had my ups and downs as all have in life, John Norton, but in the main I have been successful."

"Have yer friends been true to ye, boy?"

"Some have and some haven't," was the answer.

"'Tis the way of the world, Henry, and ye mustn't grieve, fer some be weak and some be wicked, and atween the two the party thins out as the trail grows long. There be few that live out the trail and come with us to the edge of the Great Clearin'."

The young man made no reply, but the look that he gave his aged companion was both reverent and affectionate. After a moment the old man said, —

"The grave by the sea, under the pine, Henry; is the mound well kept, and is the man we paid to keep it, faithful to his word?"

"I saw it last week," answered the young man, "the roses were in blossom, and the man had trimmed the grass properly."

"'Tis well," answered the Trapper, "the lad had a great likin' for flowers, and yer idee of plantin' the leetle tree by the head of the grave was a good un.

The livin' be often ongrateful, but what we do for the dead is never forgotten."

Again there was a pause. "Have ye ben into the cabin, Henry?" asked the Trapper.

"I have," was the answer.

"Did the pups know ye as ye come up the river, boy?"

"I found them by the foot of the pine," answered Herbert.

"I conceited it; yis, I sartinly conceited it, when I took them to the spot," said the Trapper, "for their noses be good, and I said to myself, The pups will scent the boy ef he comes up the river. What did their bein' there tell ye, boy?"

"I reasoned that you was in danger, John Norton."

"Who did ye think would distarb me in my years?" questioned the Trapper.

"I thought of the half-breed you met in the fur country, some years ago," was the response.

"Ye reasoned rightly, boy," answered the Trapper, "and it be greater credit to ye than all yer book larnin', that ye kin read signs so as to make sense out of them. Yis, yer reasonin' was right. The half-breed has come from the North, and a gang of vagabonds with him, and they have been in my cabin, and I have been in their camp. Who is the man on the log, boy?"

"We will go up the bank, and he shall tell you for himself. He was looking for you when I found him here this morning," was the answer. And the two men, followed by the Yankee, mounted the bank, and approached the detective.

CHAPTER XII.

As they drew near, the detective arose, and with a graceful motion lifted his cap from his head. The old Trapper lifted his own broad palm to his whitened locks in a manner which suggested his earlier military service.

"This is Mr. Carson," Herbert said, speaking to the Trapper, and then he added, "Mr. Carson, this is John Norton."

For a moment the two men stood looking at each other; the younger with a look of pleasure and admiration on his face, that he made no effort to conceal; the elder with calm, observant eyes, which seemed without special effort to take in the whole man.

"I am glad to see you, John Norton," said the detective; "I have heard of you since I was a boy."

"It may be; yis, it may be," answered the Trapper. "Many people have heerd of me in the last sixty year, and many be the people I have knowed; and so I dare say ye have heerd of me."

"I was looking for you," continued the other, "when I fortunately ran across Mr. Herbert here. I've a job on hand, and I want your help in the name of the law."

"I've mighty poor idees of the law," answered the Trapper, "for I never knowed a vagabond that couldn't use it to kiver him in his devilments, or a poor hunter

git his rights in the courts of the settlements. I've found a leetle lead jediciously spent a better protection to a man's pelts than lawin', — but what be yer business, young man?" asked the Trapper, while his eyes continued to dwell calmly but searchingly on the other's face.

"I am a detective," responded the other.

The old man remained silent a moment, as if weighing the other's words, and then he said, —

"I don't understand ye."

"My business, John Norton," answered the other, "is to find out and help punish rogues; and in the cities they call a man who does that a detective."

"The business is a good un ef it be well follered," replied the Trapper. "I've did a good deal of that sort of work myself while I've ben on the 'arth. Do ye do yer scoutin' in the woods or the settlements, young man?"

"Altogether in the cities," was the reply. "There's where we find the rogues, John Norton."

"The knaves be found everywhere," answered the Trapper; "the cabins be thicker in the settlements than in the woods, and where the cabins be too thick the camp is apt to quarrel, as I have noted; but ef yer business be to find the rogues in the settlements, for what cause have ye pushed yer trail into the woods until ye stand twice a hundred mile, as a goose flies, from the ploughed fields of the settlers?"

"I followed a gang of outlaws from Quebec," was the reply. "I chased them three hundred miles, until

they buried themselves in the woods, and then, determined not to be balked of the game, I bought a boat, and followed their course the best I could until I lost them altogether at the Three Ponds this side of Indian Carry."

"Yer eye is *a* good un, young man," answered the Trapper, upon whose mind the direct speech and the cool earnestness of the detective were making a favorable impression, "ye hung to the knaves as a dog of good breedin' hangs to a scent; but how came ye to come furder than the Three Ponds; ye said ye lost the trail there?"

"I met a man on the carry," answered the detective. "I told him my errand."

"What sort of a man was he?" asked the other.

"He was drunk," was the sententious reply.

"That settles it," replied the Trapper; "yis, that sartinly settles it. 'Twas Wild Bill. It's a shame that a man with his gifts will give his wits to the care of a bottle; for when he be sober, his eye is a good un, and I have seed him shoot in a way that oughter count a good deal agin his habits when the Lord balances his account in the jedgment. What did Wild Bill say to ye?"

"He told me if I wanted to find the rogues I must find you first," responded the other.

"The man couldn't have been mor'n half drunk," answered the Trapper, "for his advice was jedicious. And so ye follered on, did ye?"

"Yes, I followed on," replied the detective, "and I

struck your camp this morning. I ran upon your cabin here, and I opened the door, and I found" —

"What did ye find?" asked the Trapper, interrupting him.

"I found the muzzles of a double rifle, and a steady face back of it," answered the other, laughing, as he looked at Herbert.

"I thought as much," replied the old man, and he laughed in his silent but hearty fashion. "Ye be never quite sartin what ye'll find behind a door when ye open it suddenly. But who be the rogues ye be follerin'?"

"There are seven in all," answered the detective: "a half-breed and four cut-throats, a gentlemanly rascal who is leader, and a creature they call the giant."

"The vagabonds be on the P'int yender," answered the Trapper, and he motioned with his hand to the south.

"God be praised!" shouted the other, and his face, ordinarily pale, flushed in his excitement. "John Norton, do you know what the rascals have with them?"

"They have a big tent, for one thing," was the cool reply.

"In the tent! — in the tent! What is there in the tent? Do you know that?" queried the other, excitedly.

"I don't know for sartin, Mr. Carson," replied the old man, "though my knife has ben in the canvas, and hadn't the boy yender ben foolish," and he pointed to the Yankee who was standing just back of him whittling a stick, and who now, from excited curiosity, drew nigher, so he might not lose a word that was said,

"ef it hadn't ben for the boy's foolishness, in another minit I'd have knowed what the big tent had in it."

"So you want to know what is in the tent, John Norton?" reiterated the detective.

"Sartin, sartin," answered the Trapper. "I know the vagabonds have something in the tent they oughtn't to have; and I know it's a human being; for my ear has been at the canvas, and I've heerd the motions within, and they be the motions of a man and not of a beast. And by the sounds of the motion, I think the man be a woman."

"You have hit the nail on the head, John Norton," responded the detective; "the gang at the Point are kidnappers. There's a woman in the tent, and that's her picture;" and the detective drew a case from the pocket of his coat, opened it, and with a quick motion thrust it out toward the Trapper and Herbert.

Herbert and the Trapper gazed at the pictured face before them without a word, and the picture they gazed at was this:

The picture of a room, large and high; on the walls were paintings. In two of the corners marble statuary gleamed white between half-drawn curtains. The floor was richly carpeted. A costly rug with the picture of a knight in full armor woven into it with bright colors. In the centre of the room a table. On it a few books. By the table stood a girl, at that age when the girl is almost rounded out into a woman. She was tall in stature and stood erect. Her head slightly lifted. Her

hair of light brown, unconfined, fell to her waist. Eyes large, above which were strongly marked brows. The forehead low and white. Her hair above rippled on the white line of it. The mouth, some would say, over large. Her nose abundant. The cheeks not yet rounded full. A large-sized, tender, clean-cut, womanly face. A face to pray to, if you were a devotee. A face to die for, if you were heroic. The eyes in the picture were both a splendor and a disappointment. They were all they should be, or all they could be; but in them was something — was it too deep a shade? Was it too bright a gleam? Had the artist, in touching up the portrait, made a mistake, and marred nature? No matter from what cause, there was a look in the eyes that oughtn't to be there in one so young — an over intent look, as if she was unduly alert, or too tense from uncontrollable nervousness.

"The face is a good un," said the Trapper, as he studied it, "the Lord has gin her much, but he has kept back somethin', for the eyes be not right. I have seen the same look in the eyes of a hound, when he heerd the sharp voice of his master, and couldn't git the line of his call. And there's a line round the mouth that oughtn't to be there, in one of her years; for she be young, and the young oughter chatter like the little wren under the eaves of the cabin."

"John Norton!" exclaimed the detective excitedly, "I thought my eyes were trained to note things closely, but you have seen what I didn't see. And I'll tell them at the office, when I get back, that a trapper in

the woods saw at a glance what the whole corps studied over for days without finding the clew."

"Very like, very like," said the Trapper carelessly. "I have lived in the woods nigh on to seventy year, and many be the times that my eyes saved my scalp, and leetle be the sarvice that the eye does a man, whether it be in the woods or the cities, onless it tells him the meanin' of things. What's the matter with the girl, Mr. Carson?"

"*She is partially blind!*" exclaimed the other.

"The ways of the Lord be past findin' out," said the Trapper reverently, "and his jedgments in the main be beyend doubt correct; but arter my way of thinkin' — and I ax his pardin ef the thought be evil of me — arter my way of thinkin', he give the girl too much, onless he parposed to give her more; for the form of her featurs be parfect, and the gifts of her senses should not have ben wantin'. Henry, did ye ever see a handsomer face? I have seed many women in gladness and grief both; but I've never seed a woman whose gladness or whose grief tetched my feelin's deeper. Ef the vagabonds hurt a hair of her innercent head, they die without marcy!"

"She is, indeed, beautiful," answered Henry, "and it may be the very loss she endures has contributed to make her more beautiful; for with all the strength and brilliancy that her countenance shows, there is the suggestion of a sweeter and tenderer sort, — a look of forming patience on her face, as one who, knowing her deprivation, has at last disciplined her soul to bear it."

"Be seated, gentlemen," said the detective. "I will tell you the story of the Girl in the Tent."

They did as requested, and for half an hour the detective had the three for his auditors.

The detective finished his narration. He looked into the eager and flushed faces of his companions and said, as he closed the story,—

"What do you think of that, gentlemen?"

"Her uncle is a vagabond!" exclaimed the Trapper. "I'd give a pack of my best pelts ef he was on the P'int, and I lay within range, and could line the sights on him. I hope I shall be ready, Henry, when the time comes to go," said the old man, turning to Herbert; "but I'm afeerd that there won't be one left to sarve the Lord with any arnestness in the direction of my gifts, when I've emptied the horn and come to the last bullet in the pouch. Lord, how I've peppered the vagabonds, off and on, sence I sighted on the first scamp I run agin, sixty year agone, on the yender side of the Horicon!"

"Do you think," asked the detective, "that any harm has come to the girl?"

"I conceit not," answered the Trapper. "The blackamoor guards the door of the tent, and he owns no master but the gambler; and, though the young man's in bad company, and will probably go to the devil himself, yit he has a good deal of good stuff in him. Ye should have seed him shoot with his leetle pistol, Henry! Ye see we had a leetle match right on the

beach here one mornin', and we shot agin each other, and he actually made me a leetle careful of how I held the piece. Ye see he's in the scrape, as I git at it, to help a friend, and while he is detarmined to carry his p'int — yis, he actually tried to shoot me in the camp this mornin' — yit I am sartin that he would see no hurt come to the girl. But, of course, the quicker she be out of the tent, and in a good, honest cabin with honest folks, the better it will be."

"Will you please tell me, John Norton, all that has occurred?" asked the detective. "You have had some fighting; that I know; but how the outlaws are placed, and what's the best plan to adopt, I don't know. Will you, therefore, please tell me all that has happened, and give me your advice?"

The Trapper consented, and narrated in brief all that had occurred, dwelling with a special fulness upon his fight in the cabin, and the bravery of the Yankee. Indeed, he pronounced a eulogy on Jim Bean of a character to place him high in the esteem of his companions, — passing over as lightly as he could the whistling exercise, by which his well-laid and boldly executed plan of discovering who was in the tent had been made a failure. The result of the narration was, that the detective and the Yankee were especially delighted, — the one, that instead of two he could count on three brave assistants in the forthcoming struggle; and the other, that his bravery was so handsomely acknowledged, and his foolishness was so easily smoothed over.

"And now, gentlemen," said the detective, "since I know the true condition of things, the question arises, — and it is well that I should ask it at this point, — Will you help me deliver the girl?"

"Sartin," answered the Trapper, "and mighty short work we'll make of it, too, ef wust comes to wust, though I hope it may be did without overmuch sheddin' of blood; but the half-breed and his gang be bent on murderin' me, and when it comes to sech a p'int, and the scrimmage be j'ined, it won't do to throw away yer lead."

"What do you think is the best plan, John Norton?" asked Herbert.

"I don't conceit that the vagabonds will leave the plannin' to me, for I've sorter got the better of 'em sence they come into the lake, and they're pritty bitter in their feelin's. Yis, I've poked 'em up pritty sharp, and the probabilities is, that they be madder than hornets when you've kicked agin their nest. I sartinly conceit that the vagabonds will save us the trouble of visitin' 'em, for their blood be up, and when wrath comes in, wisdom goes out. I shouldn't be surprised ef ye heerd the crack of their pieces" —

The old man never finished the sentence, for a violent push from Herbert sent both the detective and the Trapper to the ground, the young man himself following at the same instant.

The movement of Henry, sudden and violent as it was, was of that character which, though opposed to all rules of etiquette, needed no apology, as it doubtless

saved their lives. For as the two men rolled upon the ground, two rifles cracked simultaneously, fired from either corner of the Trapper's cabin, not fifteen rods away.

Herbert, while listening to the Trapper, had, by merest accident, chanced to turn his eyes in the direction of the cabin, and saw the deadly barrels projecting from the angles of the logs. Rightly divining that the first objects of their murderous design would be the detective, whom they hoped to escape, and the Trapper, whom they hated, he had, regardless of his own safety, pushed them violently from their seats to the ground. The old Trapper escaped unscarred; but the detective, as he fell, was aware, by the tingling sensation, that a bullet had cut through the flesh of the arm below the shoulder.

The moment he had pushed his companions from the log, Herbert himself dropped to the ground, and shouting to the Yankee to dive down the bank, had rolled himself back of a rock several yards away, and which gave him ample protection. The Yankee needed no second warning, for the experience he had already had, since he broke into the Trapper's cabin on the night of the fight, had sharpened his wits to the true nature of an emergency, and, therefore, when Herbert called, even as the pieces cracked, with a single jump he cleared the brow of the bank, and landed on the beach twenty feet below.

The old Trapper, with a quickness which gave evidence of his agility, had done precisely what Herbert

had, and now, crouched behind a rock, was ready for action.

The detective, with equal wit, feeling himself amply covered, lay closely up under the huge log on which he had been sitting, his revolver in hand, and his face white with pain, but calm with the calmness of coolest courage.

"Henry," said the Trapper, "ye have did me many a sarvice, but never a better than ye did me jest now. 'Twas jediciously did, boy, and I will remember it to yer credit, and I dare say Mr. Carson, though the lead got into him a leetle, won't forgit ye; for a mortal is apt to remember a man that saves his life. Yis, Henry, yis, I see the vagabonds, and the Blackamoor be down by the beech stump to the left of the spring. I doubt ef they make a rush, for they know that the fust one that onkivers his ambushment will die. There's a speck of red flannel that shows itself on the north side of the beech-tree yender. A leetle practice won't hurt ye any, and ef yer bullet gits into it, leaving half of its width on the bark as it passes, it will larn the vagabond to lie closer.

"Ye did well," continued the Trapper, for Herbert's rifle had cracked while he was speaking. "Ye did well, for ye started the bark handsomely, and don't ye fear of gittin' yer bullets into the bodies of the vagabonds, for the law's on our side, and the right, too, which isn't always the case, as I conceit; but, when they do git together, a man who knows how to shoot shouldn't waste his powder. Come, Mr. Carson, what say ye?

I see ye have yer pistol ready, and there's six holes in the end of it. Shall we make a rush at the knaves? I think the vagabonds will show us their backs when they hear the number of our pieces, and two or three of them git a tech of our lead."

"Yes, John Norton," answered the detective, and he half gathered himself for a spring from behind the log; "let's charge on the rascals. You'll find me in front when you give the word."

"Take it cool, Mr. Carson, take it cool," answered the Trapper; "when ye move up into an ambushment, never move but a few steps at a time, and be sure to keep yerself well kivered. James," he called to the Yankee under the bank, "the vagabonds that trussed ye up to the tree be in front of us, and we are goin' to move up a leetle nigher. I see the Blackamoor back of a stump where the bank runs through the beach into the lake; and I doubt ef he has any *wee*pon but his fist. Do ye feel like havin' a set-to with the man that tossed ye inter the air a leetle roughly this mornin'?"

"Deu I, old man?" answered the Yankee from beneath the bank, "jest let me git my eyes on the nigger. Yis, yeou let me git a square hold on him, and then yeou fellers jest set deown on the logs, and ef ye don't see the darndest up-and-deown wrastlin' match yeou ever set yeour eyes on, my name ain't Jim Bean. Where is he, old man?"

"Right ahead of ye. It will take two moves to get

at him: go to the ledge fust, when I give the word. Mr. Carson, jump for the dead pine in front of ye. Henry, dash inter the hazel-bush to the right. Ready! Keep under kiver, boy; keep under kiver," continued the old man to Herbert. "Now" —

CHAPTER XIII.

AT the word, the four men with simultaneous movement made their rush forward. It was done so quickly that their enemies had not time to get in even a shot.

"Hold as ye be!" shouted the Trapper to his companions; "hold as ye be, and lie close! The rush was a good un. Ef that half-breed shows the butt of his elbow ag'in like that," muttered the Trapper, interrupting his address to his companions, "he'll wear splinters for a month. The rush was a good un," repeated he. "Ye jumped at the word, and they never got in a shot. Lord! Henry, ye went into the leetle hazel-bushes as a rabbit goes into the thicket when it sees the shadow of a hawk on the grass, and the rush of his wings be in his ears. Move as fur as ye can to the right, boy, and see ef ye can't take 'em in the flank. The crack of a piece from the big beech on the knoll would start 'em like ducks out of the sedge, when the shot splash around 'em. Yis, boy, practise the gifts of yer crawlin', and git on the flank of the rogues. Then pick the man that suits ye least, and gin it to him. I don't tell ye to kill him; but let the lead git into him reasonably deep that he may larn the opinion the Lord has of his devilments. Don't tech the half-breed, boy: he's been on my trail fur this seven year, and atween stealin' my furs and my traps, and burnin' two shanties that I'm

sartin of, and ambushin' me four times for my death, and a dozen shots more or less he's fired at me off and on, there's a good many figurs on the slate, and I conceit the time has come to wipe 'em out.

"The Lord knows," continued the old man, "that I've been considerate in the matter considerin' my gifts, or he'd have died long ago; but I held back because of the lad, and because of his readin' in the Book which said 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord' — and I conceited that perhaps the Lord would attend to the vagabond himself. But the lad mistook the meanin' of the varses, or the Lord himself be a leetle slow, for he has sartinly kept on with his deviltry, and there's but one thing that will stop him.

"Mr. Carson," said the old man, speaking to his companion on the left, "the boy is crawlin', and is doin' it well, for he's kivered his back with moss, and a big tuft of the 'arth he has fitted to his head, and he looks flatter than a rived shingle. Yis, he be doin' it well, for he be movin' inch by inch; and though he be in range of their bullets, yit, he's crawlin' as slow as a snail. But it be jest as well that the vagabonds shouldn't look that way too much, — so, ef ye can see a bit of flannel or the muzzle of a gun, crack away at it, for yer pistol loads easy, and the law pays for yer ammunition. Yis, fire away, Mr. Carson, and keep their eyes this way, for ef the boy reaches the big beech on the knoll, he'll sweep the line and put 'em up like quail from a thicket. For two barrels of the right sort, with a steady man back of 'em, can onkiver the best ambush-

ment ever made; and, ef the boy gits to the beech unhurt, ye'll see the rogues racing through the swale, like the beasts over the plains when the fire and wind be behind 'em."

Even before he was done speaking the detective had twice found a target, and twice had his bullets gone straight to the mark. The Trapper had scarcely done speaking before his rifle too cracked, and the sharp cry that came from the opposing line showed that the bullet had at least touched the flesh.

"The knave is a fool," muttered the Trapper, as he poured the powder into the barrel, "to let his hand show its width beyend the bark when he be loadin' his piece in an ambushment. He's two fingers less than he had this mornin', for sartin, and that's a comfort. Ay, ay, I see, Mr. Carson, the boy's got to kiver, and ye'll hear his piece in a minit. Boy," shouted the Trapper to the Yankee under the bank, "we'll have 'em in motion in a minit, and when knaves git to runnin' they never stop, onless ye stop 'em; so make yerself sure of the Blackamoor, ef ye want yer fun. Mr. Carson,"said the Trapper, speaking to the detective, as he gathered himself for the rush that he felt would be occasioned by the explosion of Henry's piece, "ye say the law's on our side, and ef they aint shot here they'll be hung in Canada, so it doesn't matter much what happens to the vagabonds; and I shan't be over-keerful when I draw on 'em in the rush. But there be a young man among 'em that oughtn't to be there. He has his sins beyend doubt, but he be in this devilment

by chance. His name is Dick Raymond, and his business be gambling; but I've heerd his voice, and seed his face, and felt his hand, and that's why I tell ye the girl in the tent has been kept safe from harm; and his shootin' counts mightily in his favor. Now," said the old man, as he brushed some fine dust from his eyes, that the bullet from the gambler's pistol, as it bored its way through the bark within two inches of the Trapper's head, had cast into them; "now," said the old man, "that was the boy's bullet, and ye see he shoots jediciously, for he'd got the range and kalkelated my height to an inch, and noted where my head ought to be. Yis, his shootin' be in his favor, and when the rush comes, and we have 'em in full jump, and we ourselves be onkivered, keep yer eye on Dick Raymond, for the boy has his wicked side, and he shoots quick and close. But ef ye git him in line, don't let yer lead git into the vitals, leastwise I shan't, for the boy be wuth savin'. There it is," cried the Trapper, as Herbert's piece exploded from the beech on the knoll, and a yell of pain followed the explosion. "There," shouted the old man, "it goes ag'in, and there, as I conceited, goes the inimy too. Now, Mr. Carson," yelled the Trapper, as he sprang from behind his tree, "never mind yer kiver. The swiftest foot and the quickest eye wins the scrimmage, when the ambushment is onkivered, and the knaves git a-runnin'."

The result was precisely what the Trapper had predicted. The position of Herbert commanded the entire line of the gang, and took them in flank. The young

man had spared the lives of the two he had singled out, but both were wounded, and both in the same manner and to the same extent; for the right arm of each hung powerless at his side, and their rifles had dropped to the ground. The rush that the entire party made for the swale and the balsam thicket beyond, was such as men make when they feel themselves overmatched and in peril. The pursuit of the one party was as headlong as the retreat of the other was precipitate. Once the rifle of the Trapper sounded, and the half-breed dropped as it cracked, but recovered his feet in an instant, and rushed onward, apparently unhurt.

Beyond the balsam thicket the gambler made his stand. Carson, the detective, was in full pursuit, and, as he burst through the balsams, he found himself within twenty feet of his antagonist. Both men stood for an instant, each with a pistol in his hand, each looking full at the other. Both were experts. Each knew the other.

"You count," said the gambler coolly.

"*One, two, three,*" said the detective. "*Fire!*"

One pistol alone sounded. The gambler's had failed to explode.

"You've won: you needn't deal again," said the gambler. And then he dropped. The red stain on his white shirt-front showed where he was hit.

"There's some lint and bandage," said the detective, and he flung a small package into the gambler's lap. "I hope you won't die, Dick Raymond."

"Oh, it was all fair, Carson," said the other carelessly. "I've held a poor hand from the start" —

He paused; for the detective had rushed on, and he was alone.

Twenty rods further on, the detective caught up with the Trapper, who was calmly recharging his piece. On the edge of the ledge above, the half-breed lay dead, the lips drawn back from his teeth, and his ugly countenance distorted with hate and rage. A rifle, whose muzzle smoked, lay at his side; and the edge of the Trapper's left ear was bleeding.

"I've shot Dick Raymond by the balsam thicket," said the detective. "I'm afraid he's hard hit."

"I'll go and see the boy," answered the Trapper. "You'll find Henry furder up. There's only two runnin'. You and he can bring 'em in."

The detective disappeared like a flash in the direction the Trapper had pointed.

"Ah me," said the old man, "I hope the boy isn't bad hit," and he turned on his trail, and moved quickly down toward the balsam thicket.

The gambler was seated in a reclining attitude, his body resting on the mosses, his shoulders and head supported by a rock, which, covered thickly with other mosses itself, made for his growing weakness a natural pillow. The package of lint, which the detective had thrown to him as he dashed away, after the fatal interview, lay within reach unopened. Only a stain on the white linen showed where he was hit, for the hemorrhage was all internal. Through the trees, here and there, the bright water of the lake showed clearly. The little rivulet that issued from the Trapper's spring

ran with tuneful gurgling through the swale, and filtered itself into the lake through sands pure as its own limpid stream. In the pines overhead were soothing noises. The young balsams yielded their gummy sweetness to the damp air. The pistol, by whose failure to explode he had escaped the crime of murder, lay by his side, while a dozen cards, that had been flung from his pocket as he dropped, were lying scattered about, — a suggestive commentary on the frivolity and sinfulness of his life. His eyes were open, gazing through the branches of the intervening trees at the bright patches of the shining water beyond, and the little rill soothed the stillness with its lapsing sound. One would hardly think that so unprincipled a life could come to its close as peacefully as the peacefulness of nature, which, because of its inanimateness, perhaps, had committed no sin, and could, therefore, be disturbed by no remorse. But such apparently was the case; for the look in the eyes was as placid as the lake at which they gazed, and the lines of his face were as calm and peaceful as a child's, when, just before he falls asleep, his memory is busy with the happiness of the day he has enjoyed, and to which, ere he sleeps, he would say a pleasant farewell.

The old Trapper saw, as he descended the hill, the body reclining on the mosses at the edge of the balsam thicket. The earth gave back no sound as he advanced, and he reached the gambler, and was standing almost at his very feet, ere the young man was aware of his presence; but as the form of the Trapper passed

between him and the shining water, he turned his gaze up to the Trapper's face, and, after studying the grave lines for a moment, said, —

"You've won the game, old man."

The Trapper for a moment made no reply. He looked steadfastly into the young man's countenance, fixed his eyes on the red stain on the left breast, and then said, —

"Shall I look at the hole, boy?"

The gambler smiled pleasantly, and nodded his head, saying, "It's the natural thing to do in these cases, I believe." Lifting his hands, he unbuttoned the collar, and unscrewed the solitaire stud from the white bosom. The Trapper knelt by the young man's side, and, laying back the linen from the chest, wiped the blood-stain with a piece of lint from the white skin, and carefully studied the edges of the wound, seeking to ascertain the direction which the bullet had taken as it penetrated the flesh. At last he drew his face back, and lifted himself to his feet, not a shade in the expression of his face revealing his thought.

"Is it my last deal, old man?" asked the gambler carelessly.

"I have seed a good many wounds," answered the Trapper, "and I've noted the direction of a good many bullits, and I never knowed a man live who was hit where ye be hit, ef the lead had the slant inward, as the piece had that has gone into ye."

For a minute the young man made no reply. No change came to his countenance. He turned his eyes

from the Trapper's face, and looked pleasantly off toward the water. He even whistled softly a line or two of an old love ballad; then he paused, and, drawn perhaps by the magnetism of the steady gaze which the eyes of the Trapper fixed upon him, he looked again into the old man's face, and said, —

"What is it, John Norton?"

"I be sorry for ye, boy," answered the old man. "I be sorry for ye, for life be sweet to the young, and I wish that yer years might be many on the 'arth."

"I fancy there's a good many who will be glad to hear I'm out of it," was the careless response.

"I don't doubt ye have yer faults, boy," answered the Trapper, "and I dare say ye have lived loosely, and did many deeds that was better ondid; but the best use of life be to learn how to live, and I feel sartin ye'd have got better as ye got older, and made the last half of yer life wipe out the fust, so that the figurs for and agin ye would have balanced in the jedgment."

"You aren't fool enough to believe what the hypocritical church members talk, are you, John Norton? You don't believe that there's any Judgment Day, do you?"

"I don't know much about church members," answered the Trapper, "for I've never ben in the settlements; leastwise, I've never studied the habits of the creeturs, and I dare say that they differ, bein' good and bad, and I've seed some that was sartinly vagabonds. No, I don't know much about church members; but I sartinly believe; yis, I know, there be a day when the

Lord shall jedge the livin' and the dead; and the honest trapper shall stand on one side, and the vagabond that pilfers his skins and steals his traps shall stand on the other. This is what the Book says, and it sartinly seems reasonable; for the deeds that be did on the 'arth be of two sorts, and the folks that do 'em be of two kind, and atween the two, the Lord, ef he notes anything, must make a dividin' line."

"And when do you think this judgment is, John Norton?" asked the gambler, as if he was actually enjoying the crude but honest ideas of his companion. The Trapper hesitated a moment before he spoke, then he said, —

"I conceit that the jedgment be always goin' on. It's a court that never adjourns, and the desarters and the knaves and the disobedient in the rigiment be always on trial. But I conceit that there comes a day to every man, good and bad, when the record of his deeds be looked over from the start, and the good and the bad counted up; and in that day he gits the final jedgment, whether it be for or agin him. And now, boy," continued the old man solemnly, with a touch of infinite tenderness in the vibrations of his voice, "ye be nigh the jedgment day, yerself, and the deeds ye have did, both the good and the bad, will be passed in review."

"I reckon there isn't much chance for me, if your view is sound, John Norton." And, for the first time, his tone lost its cheerful recklessness.

"The court be a court of marcy; and the Jedge

looks upon 'em that comes up for trial as ef he was their Father."

"That ends it, old man," answered the gambler. "My father never showed me any mercy when I was a boy. If he had, I shouldn't have been here now. If I did a wrong deed, I got it to the last inch of the lash," and the words were more intensely bitter because spoken so quietly.

"The fathers of the 'arth, boy, be not like the Father of heaven, for I have seed 'em correct their children beyend reason, and without marcy. They whipped in their rage, and not in their wisdom; they whipped because they was strong, and not because of their love; they whipped when they should have forgiven, and got what they 'arnt — the hatred of their children. But the Father of heaven be different, boy. He knows that men be weak, as well as wicked. He knows that half of 'em haven't had a fair chance, and so he overlooks much; and when he can't overlook it, I conceit he sorter forgives in a lump. Yis, he subtracts all he can from the evil we have did, boy, and ef that isn't enough to satisfy his feelin's toward a man that might have ben different ef he'd had a fair start, he jest wipes the whole row of figurs clean out at the askin'."

"At the asking?" said the gambler; "that's a mighty quick game. Did you ever pray, John Norton?"

"Sartin, sartin, I be a prayin' man," said the Trapper sturdily.

"At the asking!" murmured the gambler, softly.

"Sartin, boy," answered the Trapper, "that's the

line the trail takes, ye can depend on it; and it will bring ye to the eend of the Great Clearin' in peace."

"It's a quick deal," said the gambler, speaking to himself, utterly unconscious of the incongruity of his speech to his thought. "It's a quick deal, but I can see that it might end as he says, if the feeling was right."

For a moment nothing was said. The Trapper stood looking steadfastly at the young man on the moss, as he lay with his quiet face turned up to the sky, to whose color had already come the first shade of the awful whiteness.

Up the mountain a rifle cracked. Neither stirred. A red squirrel ran out upon the limb, twenty feet above the gambler's head, and shook the silence into fragments with his chattering; then sat gazing with startled eyes at the two men underneath.

"Can you pray, old man?" asked the gambler quietly.

"Sartinly," answered the Trapper.

"Can you pray in words?" asked the gambler again.

For a moment the Trapper hesitated. Then he said, —

"I can't say that I can. No, I sartinly can't say that I could undertake it with a reasonable chance of gittin' through; leastwise, it wouldn't be in a way to help a man any."

"Is there any way, old man, in which we can go partners?" asked the gambler, the vocabulary of whose profession still clung to him in the solemn counselling.

"I was thinkin' of that," answered the Trapper;

"yis, I was thinkin' ef we couldn't sorter jine works, and each help the other by doin' his own part himself. Yis," continued the old man, after a moment's reflection, "the plan's a good un — ye pray for yerself, and I'll pray for myself — and ef I can git in anything that seems likely to do ye sarvice, ye can count on it, as ye can on a grooved barrel.

"And now, boy," said the Trapper, with a sweetly solemn enthusiasm, such as faith might give to a supplicating saint, — which lighted his features until his countenance fairly shone with a light which came out of it, rather than upon it, from the sun overhead, — "now, boy, remember that the Lord is Lord of the woods, as well as of the cities, and that he heareth the prayin' of the poor hunter under the pines, as well as the great preachers in the pulpits, and that when sins be heavy, and death be nigh, his ear and his heart be both open. There was no use of his Son's dyin', ef the Father can't be forgivin'."

The Trapper knelt on the moss at the gambler's feet. He clasped the fingers of his great hands until they interlaced, and lifted his wrinkled face upward. He said not a word; but an eye that was watching noted that the strongly chiselled lips, seamed with age, moved and twitched now and then, and the same eye saw, as the silent prayer went on, two great tears leave the protection of the closed lids, and roll down the rugged cheek. The gambler also closed his eyes; then his hands quietly stole one into the other, and, avoiding the bloody stain, rested on his breast; and thus the

old man who had lived beyond the limit of man's day, and the young one cut down at the threshold of mature life, — the one kneeling on the mosses, with his face lifted to heaven, the other lying on the mosses, with his face turned toward the same sky, without word or uttered speech, — prayed to the Divine Mercy which beyond the heaven and the sky saw the two men underneath the pines, and met, we may not doubt, with needed answer the silent up-going prayer.

The two opened their eyes nearly at the same instant. They looked for a moment at each other, and then the gambler feebly lifted his hand, and put it into the broad palm of the Trapper. Not a word was said. No word was needed. Sometimes men understand each other better than by talking. Then the gambler picked the diamond stud from the spot where it rested, slipped the solitaire from his finger, and said, as he handed them to the Trapper, —

"There's a girl in Montreal that will like these. You will find her picture inside my vest, when you bury me. Her address is inside the picture-case. You will take them to her, John Norton?"

"She shall have them from my own hand," answered the Trapper, gravely.

"You needn't disturb the picture, John Norton," said the gambler; "it's just as well, perhaps, to let it lie where it is; it's been there eight years. You understand what I mean, old man?"

"I understand," answered the Trapper, solemnly; "the pictur shall stay where it is."

"The pistols," resumed the gambler, and he glanced at the one lying on the moss, "I give to you. You'll find them true. You will accept them?"

The Trapper bowed his head. It is doubtful if he could speak. For several minutes there was silence. The end was evidently nigh. The Trapper took the gambler's hand, as if it had been the hand of his own boy. Indeed, perhaps the young man had found his father at last; for surely it isn't flesh that makes fatherhood. Once the young man moved as if he would rise. Had he been able, he would have died with his arms round the old man's neck. As it was, his strength was unequal to the impulse. He lifted his eyes to the old man's face lovingly, moved his body as if he would get a little nearer, and, as a child might speak a loving thought aloud, said, "I am glad I met you, John Norton," and with the saying of the sweet words, he died.

But the water gleamed as brightly through the trees as before; the little rivulet sang as tunefully; the balsams poured their odors forth with undiminished measure, and the squirrel crept with new courage from his hiding-place, and, scampering out to the limit of the branch, poured his merry chatterings forth upon the quiet air. The Trapper lifted the body of the gambler in his arms, and bore him to his cabin, and laid him on his own bed; then, closing the door of the cabin, he went to the bank that overlooked the lake, and sounded the two signals for the return.

Perhaps an hour had passed. The old man had not

noted the passage of time: he was thinking of that graver passage which a soul had made from the edge of the balsam thicket into the great unknown. Suddenly he was aware of presences, and, looking up, saw his three companions standing nigh. Save a few bruises and some slight wounds, they were unhurt.

"I'm thankful," said the old man, "that ye all be alive. It might have been different but for yer coming, Henry; but we were too strong for 'em. Be the vagabonds well tied?"

"We have four lashed to as many trees back of the cabin," answered the detective. "The Blackamoor is in the cabin by the body, weeping like a child. He says his only friend is dead. The half-breed — well, you know where he is?"

"Yis, yis," replied the Trapper. "He brought it on himself. I offered him tarms; but the devil was in him, and I come near waitin' too long, for his bullet tingled my cheek here," and the old man turned toward them the left side of his face, which the half-breed's bullet had literally grazed as it passed; "so it was lead or nothin', and that settled it. And now, Mr. Carson, the scrimmage is over. What next?"

"What next?" echoed the detective. "The tent on the Point, and the captive in it. For two months I've followed the scamps, for I swore I'd find her before the trial came off, and place her face to face with her rascally uncle; but the honors belong to you, John Norton, and your hand shall set her free, and your face shall be the first that she sees. Come, let us go."

To this all eagerly assented, and in a moment the four were in the boat. Herbert had the oars, and the Trapper handled the paddle, and the narrow shell raced along as if driven by steam. In less than twenty minutes they were at the Point, and, running the boat in, they stepped out upon the beach. The camp was deserted, and they proceeded at once to the tent. In front of the door they paused a moment to listen. The sound as of a person moving came to their ears. They looked at each other with faces lighted with pleasure.

"The girl be alive and movin', for sartin," said the Trapper; and he laughed in his own silent genial fashion. "It'll be worth a fall's trappin' to see the look in her face when she knows she's free. Shall we go in, Mr. Carson?"

The detective simply nodded. He was too excited to speak.

The old man unbuttoned the canvas door, and disappeared. The others followed.

The tent was divided in the middle by a curtain that stretched from side to side. The half they stood in was empty; not an article of furniture even was in sight. Back of the curtain was the girl. It was her private apartment. The Trapper, with native delicacy, shrank from parting the folds where they lapped at the centre. It was a singular position. The Trapper looked at the detective interrogatively. For an instant he hesitated.

His lips were actually white. Then he summoned

his powers, and said, "I can't stand this. John Norton, for God's sake, part the curtain."

The old man turned toward the drapery. He took a step forward. He stretched out his hand. His fingers almost touched the cloth, but his hand went no farther. A sound as of a person rising from a chair was heard within. Then a step, slow and heavy, moved toward them. Then a hand grasped the curtain from within, and with a quick motion drew the clinging folds apart, *and a man, tall of stature, noble of aspect, and with a beard white as snow, stood before them!*

"God in heaven, who is this?"

It was the detective that spoke. Then he staggered against the side of the tent for support. The Yankee gave one look, and with a face white as chalk and hair actually lifting, turned and dove out of the tent.

For a minute not a word was said. The face of Herbert, under the pressure of the awful surprise, tightened, and the knit look of the features showed the tremendous effort of will he was making; but he moved not a step, and he spoke not a word.

The Trapper, who was in front of his companions, and actually within an arm's length of the apparition, — for so he might in truth be regarded — had stood the supreme test unflinchingly, for not a muscle of his face moved, or a motion of his body followed the sudden appearance. As if in deference to the other's dignity and age he had lifted his hat from his head; but beyond this he had remained unmoved.

"Gentlemen," said the man, "may I know the

reason that I have the honor of your visit?" and he spoke with that quiet courtesy that denotes the polished gentleman.

"We thought you was a prisoner," answered the Trapper.

"I am a prisoner," answered the man.

"Ye sartinly ain't the one we expected to find," responded the Trapper; "but if ye was a prisoner, ye ain't one now, for the vagabonds that had ye in their power are prisoners themselves, and we be friends, and this be the officer of the law," and he pointed to the detective.

"I thank you for your good intentions, gentlemen," answered the strange being; "but your services came too late, I fear. I've been a prisoner for twenty years." The man's words were spoken with a tone and manner that carried conviction with them.

The Trapper, astonished at the revelation, exclaimed, —

"Friend, who be ye that has been a prisoner for twenty years?"

The man looked the Trapper steadily in the face a moment, and answered, —

"I am *a man whom nobody knows!*"

PART II.

THE MYSTERY OF THE WOODS.

PART II.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was well on towards evening; for while the sun had not yet set, its orb had already declined below the summit of the mountain that rose sharply from the western shore of the lake. The water was without a ripple, and in it its monstrous bulk was reflected, as in a mirror large enough to accommodate, without shrinking, its huge proportions.

The Trapper, Herbert, and the detective were standing on the shore of the lake, engaged in earnest conversation.

"I'll allow," said the Trapper, "that I'm a good deal disapp'inted, as I know ye be, Mr. Carson, at not findin' the girl in the tent; and I conceit that Henry himself feels a leetle onsettled, like a hound when he suddenly has lost every trace of the scent that was strong in his nostrils; for though he don't say much, I can see that the boy be worried. Yis, I'll allow I'm a good deal disapp'inted, for I sartinly thought the girl was behind the curtin. And when the man put his face out in sight it was like a sudden onkiverin' of an ambushment when ye didn't expect the inemy was nigh, but —"

"I don't see how you stood the shock of the surprise as you did, John Norton," said the detective, interrupting him. "You never changed a muscle of your face, and I think mine was white as chalk. I'll admit I could scarcely stand. I was as certain, as I am at this minute that I am alive, that the girl was behind the curtain; and when that face with its white beard was thrust out it nearly took the breath out of me."

"Narves be narves," said the Trapper, "and nothin' but trainin' gits the shakin' out of 'em. Lord! I can remember when the snappin' of a twig in the woods would make my heart thump agin the ribs like a hammer; but years of campin' and trailin' and trappin', and I might say a leetle fightin' throwed in off and on, both by day and night, has took the shakin' and the thumpin' out of me, and made me steady like. I don't conceit that anything can distarb me overmuch, onless it be the failin' of a cap when there's no meat in the cabin, and the buck is a fat un; that sartinly does make a man feel empty like and shaky in his stomach. But what shall we do about the girl? We've sartinly found out what is in the big tent; but the girl that ought to be in it isn't there; and the question is: Where is she? Shall we give it up, Mr. Carson?"

"Never!" exclaimed the detective, "never, while God gives me breath, will I give up the search till I find her or find her body!" and the detective closed his sentence with a voice that shook with the strength of his emotion.

"I conceited ye would say as much," responded the

Trapper, "and ye've answered like a man. But ye'll stand leetle chance of findin' her in the woods onless ye have help; for the settlements be one thing and the wilderness be another. And a man of city trainin', though he be wise in his way, is no better than a babe, when the sarch lies in the woods and on the rivers where the path is on waters that leave no trail. And so I ax ye, Henry,—for it's well in a council that the p'ints be made clear to each one,—I ax ye, Henry, what course will ye take, and what ye be willin' to do?"

"The girl must be found." That was all the young man said.

"Ye have spoken well, Henry," answered the Trapper. "I didn't ax ye the question because I doubted what ye would say; but because it was accordin' to reason and form of conductin' a council that the question be put to ye. And it's sartinly pleasant to hear the tongue of a friend and a comrade speak out his feelin's when his feelin's be right. And so, as we three be agreed that the girl must be found, we need say no more about it."

"It is all very well," said the detective, "to say that the girl must be found; but that doesn't find her, nor do I see any way by which her whereabouts can be discovered." And he spoke in the tone of despondency.

"Hoot, boy!" said the Trapper; "ye speak out of yer feelin's, and not out of yer jedgment, when ye talk in that fashion. I've heerd ye say that nothin' can be hidden so in the settlements that ye cannot find it out; and I can conceit it is so; for I sartinly doubt ef one

can be hidden in these woods, from the Horicon to the cleared farms on the St. Lawrence, that I can't set my eyes on, ef ye give me a rational amount of time, and especially ef Henry be throwed in as a companion. For the boy has his gifts; and it is on the trail as it is in a council — two heads be better than one; ay, and two rifles, too, ef it comes to close work, and the trail tarminates in a scrimmage. And, as Henry says the girl must be found, it settles that he is to go with me. So, I give ye the word of a scout, Mr. Carson, whose eye has never failed to find what he started to find, sence he struck the west shore of the Horicon nigh on to fifty year agone, that ef ye will give us a rational amount of time, Henry and me will find the girl. And now I will ax ye a few questions, and I must ax ye to answer keerfully, for the direction of the sarch, and the reason of it, will depend on yer answers."

"Say on," said the detective.

"Ye be sure that the girl was with the vagabonds that owned this camp when they came to Indian Carry?"

"I am," answered the detective.

"Why be ye sure of it?" asked the Trapper.

"Because I saw the imprint of her shoe on the Carry," was the answer.

"Which eend of the Carry?" asked the Trapper.

"At both ends," responded the detective. "I noted it closely, and the last step she took was as she got into the boat, and the mark was deep and strong in the sands of the beach."

"Sech signs," responded the Trapper, "can't lie. Ef ye did see the girl's footstep on the beach at the southern eend of the Carry, then the girl be in the woods; and there is leetle credit in foretellin' what directions the vagabonds that had her took arter they left the beach where ye saw her footsteps."

"Where did they take her?" asked the detective, and he spoke with quick, earnest emphasis.

"They took her to the west," answered the Trapper promptly, "and I ax Henry to follow the reason of my sayin'. They come through the Three Ponds and down the Crick without a stun, till they struck the Racquette. To this p'int the vagabonds kept each other company, but at this p'int they parted, and part of them come up the Racquette, and pitched their camp here, with the man who calls himself 'The Man That Nobody Knows.' The other party went down the Racquette with the girl."

"Where is she now, then, John Norton?" asked the detective sharply.

"She be in the western woods," answered the Trapper promptly; and he swept his hand up toward the summit of the mountain that stood between him and the setting sun.

For several moments the three men remained silent; then the Trapper said, —

"Henry, be I right? What do ye say?"

"The girl is to the west," answered the young man.

"Two voices in a council of three settles it," answered the Trapper. "Mr. Carson, the boy isn't wordy, but

ye see that he and me think alike. The girl ye be lookin' for is over here by the west, ye may be sartin of that. Well, Henry, what is it?"

A look on the young man's face had elicited the interrogation. The young man hesitated a moment, and glanced at the detective.

"Say it out, boy; say it out," said the Trapper. "Say out yer thought whatever it be. We be in council, and a council where the thought is held back is not likely to be noted for wisdom. What is it ye would say, boy?"

"Why should they take her that way?" asked the young man.

The old man gazed steadily at the face of his companion; but he made no answer. Whatever was his thought he didn't speak it. He simply looked at the detective, and said, as if speaking to himself, —

"The western woods be a lonely place for sartin."

A moment's silence.

"I think the question should be answered," persisted Henry, "and so I ask again, and I'll ask it directly of him who knows most of the character of her captors: Mr. Carson, why did they take her into the woods?"

The detective's face showed rigid in every line. His teeth were set, but the words that came were clearly spoken, and were these, —

"They took the girl there to kill her."

"I conceited as much," said the Trapper; "but I doubt ef they would do it. They might do it ef they was forced to it; but there be an easier way. I have

my thought of the matter, but it needn't be said at this council. The boy and me can talk it over arter we be movin'."

"When shall you start?" asked the detective.

"As soon as we have eaten," answered the Trapper. "By the time the sun is down Henry and me can be in motion, and when it comes up we'll eat our meal sixty mile from where we be standin'. The girl be in danger, and there's no time to lose."

While the three had been thus engaged in conversation, the Yankee had been, according to his conceptions of duty, even better employed. And, as the three turned from the beach they found that a meal of unusual abundance and extraordinary variety awaited them. The larder of the outlaws was, indeed, stocked, as seldom one ever was in such a locality.

"I conceit," said the Trapper, as they were about to be seated at the table, "that our friend in the tent should be axed to jine us; for though he don't look like a man that carries a big appetite in his stomach, yit fastin' sartinly sharpens one's hunger; and I doubt ef he has tasted food sence the mornin'. He sartinly looks like a man of good breedin', and his bearin' is as grand as a gineral's. And while I trust I know how to show proper respect to my superiors, yit it may be, Henry, that the man would take to ye a leetle more nateral than he would to me. And it may be that ye would understand him and his ways, and the way to make him feel that he is welcome better than myself. And so I conceit that ye be the one to go and ax the

stranger to jine us. The meal be abundant, and he is sartinly welcome."

In accordance with the suggestion, Henry passed up toward the big tent, and entered it. In a few moments he returned, accompanied by "The Man Whom Nobody Knows." The Trapper and his companions had remained standing; though the Yankee, who, perhaps, had not perfectly sensed the propriety of the compliment thus tendered in deference to their unknown guest, had manifested unmistakable anxiety lest the viands, which he had, indeed, skilfully prepared, should become so cooled as to lose something of their savory quality.

"Ye be welcome, friend," said the Trapper, who, standing at the head of the table, addressed the stranger as he spoke, "ye be welcome to our table, and we trust our companionship will not distarb ye. And though ye will allow us to say that we was lookin' for another parson, and was onreasonably disapp'inted in findin' ye and not another one, yit we be glad that we come at the time when ye needed us, and we rejoice that ye have found yer liberty."

"I feel," said the man, "that I ought to be grateful to you and your companions, sir, in restoring me as you have to my liberty, though the word means to me less than to others; for though my body has been in bondage to a wicked restraint for twenty years, yet I myself, in the exercises of my mind and my heart, have been free. I can remember the time when bodily liberty would have been regarded as the greatest boon,

and imprisonment as an infliction which included all woes. But now, having lost the sympathies which come from association with my kind, and that interest in human affairs which can only be felt by one who mingles as an actor amid them, and having no one on earth to love, my imprisonment has become so adjusted to my moods, and, even, my employments, that it does not jar on the one or interrupt the other. I remember my life as a thing of the past, and my memory of it is as the memory of one who for twenty years has been dead. But the efforts of yourself and your companions were nobly directed; and though rather by accident than design they resulted in my deliverance, I recognize the generosity of your spirit and the friendliness of your sentiment, and I make my grateful acknowledgment to each of you;" and the stranger bowed with a noble inclination of his head to each of his deliverers. "And now," he continued, "if it be your pleasure, I will join you at your meal." Then he added, "It is the first meal I have eaten in company of my kind for twenty years."

"I have seed many men who had been in affliction," said the Trapper, as they seated themselves at the table, "but I never seed a man afore who could say, speakin' with truth, what ye have said, friend. And though it be fur from me to ax ye any questions that I ought not to ax, yit I sartinly would like to know what ye have did that would bring upon ye the life ye have led."

"Your curiosity is natural, old Trapper, for so I

judge you to be," answered the man, "and in reply I would say that the history of my life, if narrated, would fill you with wonder. I have moved in many scenes," continued the man, speaking reflectively, "and visited many climes. I have been the companion of the great; have shared their love, and been the object of their envy. The story is too long, if I were inclined to tell it, to be told under the circumstances which attend our meeting at this table. I judge, moreover, by what you have said, that you are engaged in searching for one who, like myself, was a captive; and, unlike myself, is a captive still. It may be that I shall be able to help you," and the man looked steadily at the Trapper.

"I've thought of that," said the Trapper in reply; "and it may be, ef ye will answer a few questions, ye can help us in our endeavors. We be lookin' for a girl that has been stolen from her home; and Mr. Carson here, who was follerin' her trail, is sartin that the vagabonds that had her was with the vagabonds that had you, ontil they struck the Racquette where the crick without a stun enters it."

"There are things which confirm your judgment," answered the man; "for though I was kept closely hidden from the members of the party even, so that my face and even my form, while we were journeying, was never seen, and so that I could never see any but my immediate keeper; yet I judged by sounds that the party was larger until we came to a certain point than it was afterwards. There is no doubt but that

the party divided; and the point at which they divided was distant from this camp less than a day's voyaging."

"It is as I conceited, Henry," responded the Trapper, looking at Herbert. "Yis, it sartinly is as I conceited; the party divided at the p'int that I mentioned, and them that had the girl went down stream, and them that had our friend here came up stream. And now I will ax ye, friend, ef there was any sounds that come to yer ear as ye journeyed which led ye to suspect that the one who was yer feller captive was a woman?"

"Your suspicions are undoubtedly correct," answered the man; "for though, as I said, I was not permitted to see or be seen, yet my ears were not bandaged, and more than once did I hear the rustling of a woman's dress and the light step of a woman on the Carry and in entering the boat. I have no doubt that my fellow captive was a woman; and I trust that He who has brought you to my deliverance, who needed it not, may in His infinite mercy direct you to accomplish the same for her who needs it even as one of her sex needs help in dire extremity.

"Friend," replied the Trapper, "I have passed my life on the trail, and I have sarched for many that needed to be found; and many of them I've sarched for I've diskivered. The woman, the sound of whose dress and step ye heerd, was a girl; and the girl was in the hands of her inimies. And Mr. Carson, here, feels that her inimies was plottin' her death; we sartinly thought she was in this tent, but she was not.

We sartinly thought we had found her; but we've not found her. And the sarch which we thought was ended we must take up ag'in; for the girl must be found, ef the trail of our sarchin' runs into the snow of the winter.

"And now, Mr. Carson," continued the Trapper, "the plan we should foller be parfectly plain. Ye be an officer of the law, and the vagabonds ye have captured must be delivered to them that have authority to punish. Ye must take them to-morrer mornin', and start for the North. James will go with ye, and help ye to guard them on the way. As the boy come in on business, and has had leetle chance to do any tradin' and has a nateral eye for gain; and furdermore, as he has sartinly done good sarvice in the interest of the law, I advise that ye see that he be not a loser for the time he has spent with us, and what he has did. I shall sartinly remember him myself ef the trappin' be reasonably good this winter. The night he came to me in the cabin was an onusually lively one, and the boy acted accordin' to his gifts; and whether I be able to send him leetle or much, he will know that an old man that he helped in a scrimmage when the numbers was agin him, will remember the help he did him while he lives. So it's settled that you and James start North with the vagabonds to-morrer. Afore ye go ye will bury the body that lies in the cabin by the edge of the balsam thicket where he fell. There be some things that he left me to do that must wait till the girl be found. I conceit that our friend

here will wish to stay in the tent where we found him. It's sartinly comfortable, and the pervisions for his livin' ye can see is enough. The pups will stay at the cabin and keep house. When hunger pinches 'em they will sartinly come to this p'int; for the dogs be knowin' dogs, and they'll see by the smoke of yer fire, friend, that a human bein' is here, and that'll tell 'em where they'll find food. Ye'll feed 'em when they come?"

"I certainly will," responded the man. "The dogs shall be well fed."

"Don't overfeed 'em," returned the Trapper; "no, don't overfeed 'em; for a hound should be gant to run well; and ef Henry and me be fortinit in findin' the girl, and git back in time, the pups must do some runnin'. And now as we have done with the eatin', and the plans be fixed, Henry and me might as well be goin', for the sun be down and the darkness be comin' on. Come straight to the cabin, Mr. Carson, when ye come back, and wait for our comin'. I conceit a good deal lies atween our partin' and our meetin'.

After a few moments spent in exchanging farewells, the Trapper and Herbert entered their boat, and shoved off into the lake. The parting was of a character not easily to be forgotten by those who remained, or the two that went.

"Mr. Carson," said the Trapper, as he turned himself about in the boat where he sat, paddle in hand, "have ye anything more to say?"

"Nothing," answered the detective, with a voice

that shook a trifle, "only this: Will the girl be found?"

"The girl will be found," answered the Trapper. And as he spoke he swept his paddle into the water. He took three strokes and stopped. Henry, who was at the oars, imitated his example, and, as the boat glided out into the darkness, the Trapper turned again in his seat, and, with a voice that slightly trembled in turn, said, — "Friend, take good care of the pups."

And then the boat resumed its course.

CHAPTER XV.

THE search for the girl had begun. Would she be found?

It was the morning of the third day after the Trapper and Herbert had left the Point on which was the camp of the outlaws, as narrated in the last chapter, when they might have been seen at breakfast on Tomahawk Point. They were eating heartily, as men in the woods eat after exhaustive labor. It was evident from their appearance that they had pushed the search with the greatest vigor; for their faces had the look of men who had slept but little, and whose bodies had been taxed in toil.

"I tell ye, Henry," said the Trapper, "we made a mistake when we followed the current below the Falls; and we've lost two good days, not to speak of the nights, by our blunder. I can't say that I blame myself; for the water leaves no trail, and the knowledge of man, onless there be some sign, is foolishness; and I sartinly conceited that the vagabonds, not knowin' the water-courses, would naterally foller the stream. But they didn't; for we've covered good two hundred mile sence we passed the foot of the lake on the way down, and not a track on the carries or a charred stick have we seed; and the Lord knows that there isn't three boats in the woods that would have gone down

the Falls without walkin'; and men must eat, even if they be in their devilment; and eatin' in the woods means fire, and not a match has been lighted on the lower Racquette in the last week, as I would swear before a jedge in a schoolhouse. No: the girl sartinly wasn't left on the lower Racquette, nor on any of the streams that lead into it; and we did well to turn back when we did."

"I agree with you, John Norton," answered the young man; "and I certainly thought that we should have turned back a day sooner, but" —

"It may be; it may be, boy," answered the Trapper. "It may be I was wrong in pushin' the trail so long in the direction I did; but a thing to be done well must be done thorough, and I said to myself, 'The girl sha'n't be behind me when I turn back.' We sartinly haven't wasted any time sence we struck back on the heel of the track. I never seed a man pull sixty mile agin a current with the stroke ye have pulled, boy; and I know how yer back feels."

"I will admit that I feel a little stiff," answered the young man, "and the muscles around the shoulder sockets feel as if they had been pounded with a hammer; but I felt that we had been going the wrong way, and the sooner we got back for a new start, the better it would be for the girl."

"I knowed how ye felt, boy," answered the Trapper, "and I didn't say a word, though ye pulled a murderin' stroke; and I sartinly laid myself on to the paddle as heavily as I conceited was jedicious, considerin' the

length of the staff and the width of the blade. Look, Henry, and see the sun comin' up from behind the eastern range there. Did ye ever see a redder cloud, or a brighter line of fire? It sartinly looks as ef the Almighty was wavin' a torch with the sweep of his own hand through the tops of the pines."

The young man turned his eyes toward the east in silence, and contemplated a moment the splendid spectacle of the morning. He was still gazing at the kindling glory, when the old Trapper resumed, —

"The beauty of the day be one, and the beauty of the night be another, Henry. The Book says, that in the country where the Lord himself lives, they will need no light of the sun, nor of the moon neither, for that matter, for He himself giveth them light. It may be that the Scriptur' is right; and ef the words be writ in truth, and there be no mistake in the calculatin', I dare say it is right. But it sartinly seems to me that it would be a leetle dull and over-regular like ef there shouldn't be any day nor night, nor any mornin' and evenin'; for the changes of natur' be pleasant to look upon, and I must say that I should be a leetle out of reckonin' as to time ef it wasn't for the sun and the moon; and the stars be handy, too, in their risin' and their settin', ef ye are out on the water, and have any app'intment at the camp; and there is another difficulty about eatin' and sleepin'; and how could the meals be got, onless ye had somethin' to help ye fix the hour, or was mightily exact in yer habits?"

"Some think," answered the young man, interrupt-

ing his companion, "that there will be no eating or sleeping there; but that everybody will live without" —

"Henry," interrupted the old Trapper in return, "Henry, ye sartinly be too wise to believe any sech silliness: eatin' and sleepin' be in the order of natur', and it's onnateral to go without 'em. The better the place and the happier ye be, the more 'arnest is the appetite, and the sweeter be the sleep. The sorrowful eat leetle; and them that be grievin' know leetle of slumber. It's sartinly foolish to suppose that the things that be nateral to the body here, won't be nateral to the body there. Be I right, boy, in this?"

"They say," responded the young man, "that is, some say, that in the spirit world, people have no bodies at all."

"Henry, ye be sartinly crazy! I mean they be crazy that talk in that way. Bodies! How can there be any people without bodies? and how shall we know each other? How be ye and me and the Lad to consort together onless we can see each other; and what about the pups — yis, Henry, what about the pups? There sartinly must be eatin' and sleepin', ef the dogs is to be round; and ye sartinly can't conceit that any spot would be homelike and rational to live in, to a man of my natur' and habits, onless the dogs be in the cabin."

"It may be you are right, John Norton," answered the young man, smiling; "I am only telling you what some people think. I don't say they are right in their thinking. They have their ideas of heaven, and you

have yours. What sort of a place do you think heaven will be, John Norton?"

"Henry," answered the Trapper, "I've thought a good deal of that; yis, I've thought a good deal of that. Ye see I'm gittin' on in years, and though I don't conceit I've come to the eend of the trail, yit, still I'm gittin' on that way; and, as ye have axed me the question, I'll answer it jest as I feel. I don't conceit that heaven is very onlike the 'arth. It can't be much prittier" — and the old man paused a moment, and gazed off upon the level surface of the lake, which as yet knew no ripple, for the morning wind had not begun to blow, and the great mountains were reflected in the still depths, from base to summit; and then he lifted his eyes till his vision commanded the eastern sky, now all aglow with the morning light. Long and earnestly he gazed as one gazes at a spectacle too lovely and majestic to be lightly admired; and then he turned his eyes upon his companion, and said, while he swept his hand outward with the most natural of gestures, "Henry, this be heaven, ef the lad and the pups was here, and the girl was found, and the vagabonds was within easy range."

The young man laughed long and heartily.

"Ye be pleased, boy," continued the Trapper; "ye be pleased at the conceit of an old man; and I dare say my words seem foolish to ye; but they be the words of my heart. And I be glad to hear ye laugh; for though we be on 'arnest work, and a life be in jeopardy, it may be, yit the laugh of the innercent

never hinders their workin'. And I say ag'in, ef the Lad and the pups was here, and the girl was found, and the vagabonds was in easy range, and the Lord didn't interfere, but let things happen as they naterally would happen, this would be heaven. Leastwise" —

He stopped — stopped suddenly, with an involuntary movement of his hand towards the rifle that lay at his side — stopped, because of a look that had come to his companion's eyes as he was speaking.

"What is it, boy? What is it?" he said in a whisper.

The young man simply lifted his hand, and pointed with his finger toward a clump of bushes that stood on the shore of the lake.

"Henry," said the Trapper, as his eye followed the direction of the movement, "yer eye be of the best, and yer senses be onlike the senses of most; for they be separate. For ye look as ye eat, and yer eatin' stops not yer seein'. It be but a thread, but sech a thread as never growed on a bush. Let us see what it is," and in a moment the two men were standing by the bush.

A thread. Nothing but a thread. A brown thread. A fragment from the fringe of a shawl blown by the winds, perhaps, to the twig whence it hung.

For a minute the two men stood side by side, looking at the fragment of woollen yarn, and then their eyes involuntarily met, and the Trapper said, —

"Henry, the girl has been on this p'int."

And then the two set themselves to their work. Foot by foot they canvassed the ground; they literally crept over it. Not a pine cone, not a broken stick, not a twig escaped their eyes. They circled the shore. Every stone was studied; every pebble inspected. Not another sign; not another trace, that the point had been visited, could they discover. Not till they had returned to the spot they had left was a word spoken by either; then the Trapper said, —

"'Twas the wind that did it, Henry. Yis, 'twas the wind of the Lord that did it. The vagabonds started to land on this p'int, but the knaves didn't land. They was afeared, in their devilment, to stop in so open a place; but they passed nigh the p'int. The wind was blowin' here from the east; in passin', the girl lifted her shawl, and the winds blew this thread from her garments, and yer eyes seed the sign that the Lord, in his marcy, caused to be left. We be on the trail at last"

"Where were they going?"

"They was goin' to the south," answered the Trapper, "and the half-breed's cunnin' is here; yis, the half-breed come with 'em to this lake, and that is why they didn't keep the current of the stream down; for the outlet of the lake to the river be a blind un, and no common eye could have seed it. Yis, the vagabonds has gone to the south; and it may be they'll come back from the south, and the girl, ef she be livin', and her body, ef she be dead, be off here to the south, and we must be goin'."

In a few moments the two men had collected the fragments of food that were left, and the few cooking utensils, and were standing beside their boat. Henry took his seat at the oars. But, as the Trapper was about to push it from the beach, he paused, and said,—

"The thread, Henry. We had better take the thread."

"I have it here," answered the young man. And he took it from his pocket where he had carefully placed it.

"It's a great comfort to scout with ye, Henry," said the Trapper, as he pushed the boat from shore. "Yis, it's a great comfort to scout with a man who has the nateral gift. Ye have the thread, and we'll find the footprint of her from whose garment 'twas blowed, on the carry by the falls yonder. Lengthen yer stroke, boy, for I long to be on the ledge."

They reached the ledge where the water of the river above tumbles over into the lake, — tumbles over noisily, white as seething water may be, and with a roar which sounds miles away. They reached the ledge, and landed, — landed carefully, and stood side by side.

"Keerful, Henry," said the Trapper; "keerful now. Even the moss must be eyed. Keerful, boy; inch by inch. Days have come and gone sence they was here; but here they was, and here"—

The Trapper's finger closed on the arm of his companion with a sudden grip. The finger of the other hand pointed to a little collection of sand that the winds had whirled into a slight hollow in the rock. Well might he check his companion; well might his

finger point to the indentation in the ledge; for there, in the little circle of sand, scarcely larger than the foot itself, was the plain outline of a small shoe.

"God in his marcy be praised!" ejaculated the Trapper, as he loosed his hold on his companion's arm, and lowered himself on his knees to inspect the footprint more closely; "that be a sign that cannot lie, and the girl has been on the ledge. Here be the beginnin' of the trail; and the two that stand at the beginnin' will find the eend."

"What shall we find at the end, John Norton?"

"There be One who knows," said the Trapper reverently. Then he added, "At the eend of the trail we shall find the girl or — the girl's body."

A thorough examination of the ridge which lay between the lake and the river above the falls was made. It was by no means fruitless. The passage of time and the rains that had fallen had done much to obliterate the footprints; but to eyes trained as were those that were searching the ground, many evidences remained of so strong a character as to justify a positive conclusion. It was not till the inspection had covered every square foot of ground, and the least sign that remained had been closely examined, that a word was spoken; but at last the Trapper drew himself up from the stooping posture which his examination of the trail had compelled him to assume, and said, —

"Henry, the whole story be writ here in the sand, and the grass, and the moss, as plain as readin' in a book. The vagabonds has passed up, and the vaga-

bonds has gone down; for here be their tracks. The girl went up with 'em, but the girl wasn't with 'em when they come back. For the signs of her goin' up be many, and sech as don't lie; but there be not a single sign of her goin' down. The girl, therefore, be up here to the south, and the vagabonds, by this time, be in the settlements of the north. They've did their devilment, and got off. I'm sorry to say it; for I built a good deal on ambushin' the knaves — leastwise, of gittin' them within range of our lead; and it does look as ef the Lord had made a mistake. But it may be he'll fix another app'intment atween us, and so we'll let that matter go. Ef he don't, there's been somethin' wrong in our calculatin', or there's been somethin' wrong in his; for I know every foot of the ground, as I scrimmaged over most of it forty years agone, and I could have fixed an ambushment for the knaves that would have been jest as good as Jedgment Day. Yis, I sartinly feel that somebody has blundered. But the girl be to the south, and she must be found. And now, as we be in council, I ax ye ef ye've any idees to offer on the p'int?"

"I think, as you say," answered the young man, "that the villains have come and gone. We are too late to punish them. I regret it chiefly because, had we met them, we might have found out" —

"That's it, boy," interrupted the Trapper, "that's it: ef we could have ambushed the villains, we'd got the whole story out of 'em; for nothin' makes a man who is on some devilment talk, like the muzzle of a

rifle, especially ef the piece be held right, and the man back of the piece looks as ef he was in 'arnest. Lord, how many things I've found out in that way! Did I ever tell ye the story of the chap who fired my shanty on the head waters of the St. Regis once?"

"I don't remember as you did," answered Henry, somewhat impatiently; "and I don't know what good the story would do us now."

"Hoot!" responded the Trapper; "ye be too eager, boy. A leetle talkin' helps the thinkin', as I conceit, when ye be on a trail, and the trail be a blind un. A hound wouldn't work up a cold scent ef ye muzzled him, Henry. He works better ef he gives voice off and on. I've often conceited, as I've seed Rover nosin' round where water was plenty, that it helped him to hear his own cryin'. But we won't quarrel over the matter; I'll tell ye the story some other time. The scamp fired my shanty; but he fired it a leetle too late, for I was in sight when the bark began to blaze; and a leetle lively movement got me within range, and I drawed on the vagabond as he plunged into the swamp. He waited for me arter that, and it took me a week, with the splints and the yarbs, afore I got him on his legs ag'in. You see, the sight of the blazing bark which I had peeled with my own hands, and slept under many a night, riled me a leetle, and I sighted a good deal in 'arnest. But I'll tell ye the story some other time. But I axed ye about the girl — and what be yer idees in the matter?"

"I think," answered the young man, "we must fol-

low up stream. Is the river one? or does it divide above, somewhere?"

"It splits a mile above here," answered the Trapper, "and part turns to the right, and part to the left."

"Is it good boating to the right?" asked the young man.

"It's the devil's own stream, Henry," answered the Trapper. "I've trapped on it for twenty year, and many be the mink and the otter I've taken on its banks. But the channel be rocky and the water be swift, and there's a good deal more wadin' than boatin' on the branch that turns to the right above the p'int where the river splits. I don't conceit that the knaves would go fur in that direction."

"How is it with the part that turns to the left? Is that easier?"

"Sartinly, sartinly," answered the Trapper. "It be easier because trampin' is easier than wadin', and ye've got to fetch several carries afore ye come to the fust lake beyend."

"I think they went to the left, John Norton. At this point the half-breed left them; and beyond this point they had no guide, and they would naturally take the easiest and plainest course. We shall find the trail to the left."

"Ye sartinly speak jedgmatically, Henry," responded the Trapper; "and ef they did turn to the left, we shall sight the footprints of the knaves at the foot of the rapids, where they took to the banks."

"Let's be going, then," answered Henry.

In a few minutes the two were pushing up the stream.

At the foot of the rapids, as they had anticipated, the trail showed itself plainly — showed that three men and a woman had passed into the woods. The Trapper shouldered the boat, and Henry, with the rifles and the pack, and his eyes on the trail, pushed ahead. The sun was well up, and the woods were sweltering. Here and there a partridge strutted across the trail, and, fluffing up on to some fallen tree stump, craned its neck, and eyed the two men interrogatively. The roar of the rapids, as the water tumbled on in its downward career, sounded solemnly through the woods. The morning wind had died of heat, and the great pine-tops stood unstirred, with their shiny stems glistening in the light. The heat penetrated to the very core of their branches, and gummy sweat exuded from the boughs, and dropped in fragrant dew on the ferns underneath; but the two men noticed not the appearances of Nature, but struggled on: the one with his eyes fastened on the trail, and the other laboring under the boat. An hour passed, and, panting with their exertion, they broke at last through the underbrush that lined the bank, and stood on the broad beach of glistening sand that curved its yellow border around the northern shore. In the sand the feet of the party — the trail they had followed so toilsomely — had pressed, leaving many unmistakable evidences of their presence. The trail of the boat that they had drawn out of the water on their return could still be traced on the beach. They felt as men feel

who, engaged in a dubious undertaking, have at last reached a certainty.

"The Lord be praised, Henry," said the Trapper, as he looked at the uneven sands, "for the sight that my eyes see; for these tracks be something better than a thread of woollen yarn which the winds have blowed onto a bush. The girl be somewhere to the south. The knaves wouldn't stop on this lake: it's too open, and the way back is too plain. Push the boat into the water, and we'll be goin'."

Henry did as he was directed, and the boat was soon passing in swift career over the lake. Through it they passed, and, threading their way through a dubious channel at the other extremity, came at last to another lake, — came into it, as it were, with a flash; for, a dozen strokes from the point around which, passing with the sharpest possible curve, it entered into the wide, smooth surface, Henry himself could not have guessed that any lake was there. So sudden was the transition from the narrow to the wide waters, and so unexpected was the change from the reedy channel into the deep, dark depths, that the young man involuntarily suspended his stroke, and, leaving his oars at a trail, rose in the boat, and stood admiring the scene.

A lovelier one can scarcely be found in all the woods. In width the lake is scarcely a mile at any point; in length it stretches six. On the eastern side a range of hills, and back of these rise the great mountains. The shores are fringed with green to the water's edge, save on the western side, where the waters wash

long stretches of smooth pebbles — gray and brown and blue in color — or lave the sands of the white beaches, which make the bright curvatures of the bays. Half way down the lake a point stretches from the western shore far out into the water. Great pines stand on it: pines that the wind loves, and which love the wind in turn. The ground beneath their branches is stem-matted, through which, here and there, a little green shrub grows — perhaps a white or blue flower. On the northern side, where the point runs into the main land, white lilies, in their season, float on the water, whose waves, rolling in the shadow of the pines, toss them up and down as black nurses toss little white children, dressed in white. On the southern side the waves, in-rolling before the prevalent southern wind, dash noisily. At times their wrath whitens the shore.

Up the lake are islands; green points stretch outward; white beaches shine; and here and there a reach of yellow sand, pounded hard and smooth by the waves, gleams like burnished gold.

"John Norton," exclaimed the young man, as he stood in his boat inspecting the scene, "I've been unfortunate in not seeing this lake before. Where on the earth can you find its match?"

"It be the Lord's work, for sartin, Henry," answered the Trapper; "and I've often conceited that he made it specially to please himself; for it's sort of finished up from eend to eend. There isn't a p'int, nor a bay, nor a stretch of sand that isn't put in jest where it oughter be; and the pines be placed jedgmati-

cally; and the leetle bushes stand where they oughter stand."

"How long have you known it?" asked the young man.

"Well, it must be nigh on to forty year sence I fust wet my paddle in its waters. I can't say that I made any considerable stay on it in my fust trip through, for I got into a leetle trouble with a gang of half-breeds that I run agin down on the Grass River; and as our talkin' didn't help the difficulty any, and they was sassy because they outnumbered me, I conceited that we'd better settle it some other way."

"What happened?" asked Henry.

"Well, ye see," answered the old man, a little hesitatingly, "there was eleven of the vagabonds in all, and that made onreasonable odds. And I had to trust to the boat and the paddle to sorter even the thing up."

"You don't mean to say that they chased you through this lake, John Norton?"

"I shouldn't wonder ef that was about it, Henry, though it isn't pleasant to say it; leastwise, if I remember — you see it is a long time agone — but I remember when I passed the P'int, yender, I was pulling considerable of a stroke; and there was three boats within reasonable range of the starn, and they had one man in each boat that they didn't actally need at the oars; and as they had plenty of powder, and was mighty free in barnin' it, it seemed to me jedicious to be gittin' into crookeder water."

It was impossible for the young man not to laugh at

the quaint fashion in which the old Trapper described one of the most spirited passages of his life. And he was still laughing when he resumed his seat at the oar.

"I don't believe," said the Trapper, after a moment of silence, "I don't believe that the vagabonds came into this lake, and didn't land on that P'int. We'll land ourselves, Henry, and see ef we can larn anything of their movements."

They landed, and learned much; more than they had expected. The outlaws had not only been on the Point, but actually camped there.

"The knaves actually camped here, Henry!" exclaimed the Trapper; "and I sartinly believe that they stayed here more'n one night. For the weather was warm, and they couldn't have barnt wood enough in one night to have made that pile of ashes. Ef I could find where they got their wood, I could tell with some sartinty; for the choppin' measures the stayin'. Go and bring up the rifles, Henry, and we'll fetch a circuit back of the camp. The panthers be plenty on this lake, and the weapons may be handy."

The young man complied with his request, and the two, a moment after, rifles in hand, passed into the balsam thicket that grew in separate groves amid the heavy timber. They were pushing on, side by side, when both paused and looked at a giant spruce-tree that they were passing, the bark of which had been stripped into shreds, both at the butt and then again higher up than a man could reach.

"The one that made them scars on the bark, Henry,"

said the Trapper in a whisper, "was a big un; for ye can see that the distance atween the clawin's of his hind feet and his fore be longer than the length of a man; and the clawin's be fresh, and ef we run agin the creetur', Henry, ye must put yer bullit in at the right spot; for a panther be an ugly creetur' when he be wounded, and the man who has hurt him stands within jumpin' distance of him. Easy, boy, easy," he whispered, "the balsams be thick, and we mustn't run agin him onawares."

They had not gone ten paces when both stopped — stopped an instant; stopped at a sound; and the sound was the sound of claws rattling on the bark of a tree. The tree from whence the sounds proceeded stood at the further edge of the thicket through which they were creeping, not twenty feet away.

The two men stopped. Stopped as men will in such circumstances; their faces tense; their eyes glowing; their forms rigid; the expression of their pose as well as their features, vital, alert, eager. The Trapper, after an instant's pause, pushed the muzzle of his rifle forward, and gently lifted a balsam branch that obstructed their sight. The result proved the correctness of his calculation; for, looking through the aperture thus made, the dull red fur of the panther showed plain to sight; and the spot thus revealed was at the point where the neck leaves the shoulder. The Trapper put his lips to the ear of his companion, and breathed, rather than whispered, —

"Take him a leetle higher, Henry. When ye git

yer eye into the sights, sarch for the butt of the ear, — git the range of his eye ef ye can; but the ear will do. It's yer fust panther, boy, and don't ye make a mistake."

The young man made no sign; but the stock of his rifle came to his cheek, and the muzzle began to rise. It rose truly and steadily as if lifted in grooves; and then the eye passed into the sight, and the barrel stood as motionless as if frozen into the body of the air. For a moment it was thus held; but no report followed. The Trapper stood still holding the balsam branch aside, waiting for the explosion. Then he saw the muzzle of the rifle begin to waver and shake; then it dropped till the tubes pointed toward the earth; and as in astonishment, he withdrew the muzzle of his own rifle which was holding up the balsam branch, and turned his face toward his comrade. The eyes of the two men met, — the face of the Trapper almost wild with interrogation, and the face of Henry white as the face of the dead.

CHAPTER XVI.

For a moment neither man spoke. They stood looking at each other in silence in the tracks where they were planted, and then Herbert ejaculated, —

"God be praised!"

As the words came out of his mouth, he seized the Trapper by the shoulder, and, with a motion quick and imperious, dragged him through the balsam branches directly toward the tree whence the sound of the scratching had proceeded. The distance did not exceed six paces; and, as they broke through the bush, they stood face to face with a — man! and the man, from some freak of idiocy or insanity, had clothed himself from head to foot, even to the tips of his fingers and down to his eyes, with the skin of a panther; and the idiotic or insane creature had not only clothed himself in a panther's skin, but was actually imitating the habits of the animal whose covering he had taken for his own. Nothing but his face, as we have said, was left undisguised, and fortunate for him it was that his countenance was uncovered, else would he have paid with his life the penalty of his foolishness; for Henry, when he passed his eyes into the sights, acting according to the Trapper's suggestion, had searched for a spot as high up as the butt of the ear. And not till

the pressure of his finger on the trigger had become nearly sufficient to explode his piece did he discover that it was the face of a human being, and not the head of an animal, on which he was drawing his bead.

"It is the very same crittur, Henry. Yis, it be the very self-same crittur that me and the pups tracked last fall; and once did the hand of the Lord presarve him from my bullit, and ag'in has the hand of the Lord presarved him from yourn. I do not wonder, Henry, that yer face whitened, for yer finger must sartinly have been heavy on the trigger, when ye sighted the true color of his skin, and ye come nigh doin' murder. But his blood would have been on his own head had yer eye ben less keen, and yer finger less steddy; for he has taken, in his foolishness, for his coverin' the hide of an animil that is man's nateral inimy; and when a human bein' convarts himself into an animil, he must take the fortin' of an animil, so"—

He would have said more, but the terrible creature—for indeed he was terrible to the sight—who had remained clinging to the tree, suddenly turned, and, crouching down like the ferocious animal whose appearance he had simulated, gathered himself for a spring, pouring out of his mouth a succession of screams so startlingly savage that the young man involuntarily started back.

"None of that, none of that," said the Trapper, "jest be a leetle keerful in yer actin', for the hammer of my right barrel be lifted, and I ain't in the temper to stand any of yer foolishness. I can see by yer eye that ye

know the meanin' of a grooved barrel when ye look into it; and though I don't conceit that ye have but a leetle wit, yit ye mustn't play any of yer tantrums on a man who hates the color of yer skin, and ain't more'n half suited with yer actin'."

The singular creature still kept his crouching position, but the growl which again proceeded from his mouth was not only far less in volume, but of gentler expression.

"That's right; that's right," said the Trapper; "sober down as fast as ye can; and the quicker ye git to yer nateral wit, ef ye have any, the better it'll be for ye. And as I have a sort of feelin' that a man in yer predicament needs a lift out of his foolishness, I sartinly advise ye to quit yer crawlin', and stand up on yer legs; and as it may hasten yer thinkin' a leetle, and help ye to a right jedgment, I'll tell ye that ef ye don't git onto yer legs in a nateral way, I'll help ye git onto 'em. So h'ist yerself onto yer feet, or I'll treat ye as a man oughter be treated who takes the devil's own skin for his kiverin'. H'ist, I tell ye," said the Trapper. "H'ist, I tell ye, and be quick about it, for ye fooled the boy in his fust shot at one of yer kind, and I won't stand any more of yer foolishness."

The eye of the Trapper and the sound of his voice, rather than the words that he spoke, or the meaning of them, probably influenced the insane creature to the decision that the Trapper demanded of it; for, after eying the speaker steadfastly for a moment, during which time the wild light of insanity was fading from

his eyes, the man thus strangely clothed rose to his feet, and stood as if expecting further commands.

"I be glad to see ye actin' more rational like," continued the Trapper, "and it may be the Lord has brought ye to our presence to help us in our sarchin'. I've some questions to ax ye, and as the bushes be a leetle thick here, and I don't like to leave the boat too long out of sight, ye had better come with us to the beach, where we can have a little convarse, and hold a council on the matter. So ye lead on toward the P'int. Yis, ye go ahead of us, and don't ye try any of yer tricks at gittin' away; for the fust jump that ye take, onless it be in the line of the P'int, will make ye wear splints for a month, and need the vartue of yarbs."

With this admonition the Trapper stepped one side, and with an authoritative gesture motioned the strange creature to precede them in their return to the Point. This he did promptly; and in a few moments they were again standing under the pines, nigh the boat.

. . . . . .

"I'm a leetle onsartin, Henry," said the Trapper, "how to speak to the critter. His foolishness p'ints in the wrong direction, for it don't p'int towards his kind; and how to convarse with a man that conceits himself to be an animil is more'n I can tell."

"Can't you talk with him by signs?" asked Herbert.

"I've did a good deal of that in my day," answered the Trapper; "I've made a good many signs that have been understood; and I've made a good many signs that them I was makin' them to didn't understand.

Now, the redskins on the plains talk by signs, and it's the easiest way of talkin', for ye can say jest about what ye want to, and ye can say it in yer own way; and that oughter content a reasonable man. But a redskin has an eye for signs and motions, and ef he once gits on the track, he'll foller ye to the eend."

"Perhaps he will talk," responded Henry, encouragingly.

"He has a mouth, for sartin," said the Trapper, "and he can git a good deal of noise out of it, as ye can testify; for he opened on ye in the balsam thicket in a way that act'ally made ye start." And the Trapper laughed heartily at the remembrance of the scene. "Yis, Henry, ye act'ally jumped when the critter opened on ye; and I don't know as I blame ye; for he sartinly did make an onhuman noise. Yis, he can make a noise for sartin; but whether he can make a noise with any sense in it is another question. But I might as well try him, anyway."

During the continuance of this dialogue, the singular being, who was the object of it, stood as if unconscious of their voices or their presence. His face had on it the stolid look that comes not merely from the absence of reason, but from inanition itself. His eyes were unintelligent, save when lighted with frenzy; and his features without expression, save when convulsed with some spasm of ferocity. The Trapper stood and eyed him curiously. He felt the task that he was to undertake was one of the utmost difficulty; and that, as to the accomplishment of it, there was but the dimmest

prospect. But the motive which moved him to the effort was of the noblest, and the feeling which actuated him, deep and strong. That the girl was somewhere in the woods he knew. That she was probably left somewhere in the vicinity of this lake he deemed probable; and that this singular creature, in his aimless ramblings, might have run across her, or, at least, seen the boats of the outlaws in their coming or their going, was at least possible. He therefore determined, if it lay in his power, to obtain from the strange being in front of him whatever he might know touching the whereabouts of the girl, or the coming and going of the party whose prisoner she was.

"I think ye be a fool," said the Trapper to the strange creature, after he had studied his face closely for a full minute, "and ef there be any sense in ye, that yer craziness will make it of leetle account in this council. And so, atween the two, what ye don't know, and what ye wouldn't know ef ye did know it, I don't conceit that I shall git much out of ye. But the girl must be found, and it may be that the Lord sent ye in yer craziness to this P'int; and that he made Henry see the color of yer true skin to answer the parpose of his marcy. For ef he didn't, I must say, I can't account for the boy's failure in the balsam thicket."

With these words the Trapper put himself in front of the object of his remarks, and prepared to address him.

CHAPTER XVII.

"THE fust thing for us to settle," said the Trapper, addressing himself to the man who was clothed in the skin of the panther, "before we git very far in this council is, whether ye be a man, or whether ye be an animil: for, ef ye be a man, the convarse is to be of one kind, and ef ye be an animil, the convarse will be of another kind; and as ye look about as much for one side of the case as ye do for the other, it isn't easy for a man of my gifts to settle it without advice. And as ye ought to know which ye be better than any one else, I'll ax ye the question, and ef ye give it anything like a rational answer, the main p'ints of the case will be fixed to start with."

Here the Trapper paused a moment, and fixed his eyes steadily on the eyes of the singular being in front of him, as if he would, by the steadfastness of the gaze, concentrate his attention, and re-establish the connection of mutual intelligence and sympathy which he had lost, or feigned to have lost, with his species; and then he said, speaking with direct bluntness, —

"Be ye man, or be ye an animil?"

If the Trapper had expected any response, he must have suffered a keen disappointment; for not only did the singular creature fail to make any verbal answer, but even to make the least sign. He returned the gaze

of the Trapper with eyes that neither shrank from the steady orbs of the other, nor emitted the least ray of intelligence. Not only the eyes remained utterly expressionless, but the inane look of the countenance and the stolid calmness of the features kept their possession of a face which only in its outlines and the curves of its formation seemed of human kind.

The Trapper waited the moment out, and then he turned toward Herbert, and said with a tone in which vexation and humor were equally mingled, —

"No, Henry, the creetur' isn't over-talkative, and, under ordinary sarcumstances, I should set it down to his credit; for the greatest part of the troubles of the world, leastwise, as I've obsarved it, comes from over-talkin'. The redskins have the vartue of keepin' their mouths shet and their eyes and their ears open; and that's accordin' to reason, as I conceit, for the eyes see too much, and the ears hear too much, for the tongue to be tellin' it. And the less a man says of what he has seed and what he has heerd, the better folks will like him, and the less evil he will do, as a rule. I sartinly doubt ef the Lord will have a single p'int to make ag'in this creetur' in the jedgment on the ground of his over-talkin'. I feel so sartin about it that I don't think it is wicked to tempt him a leetle. Ye be quick-witted, Henry, and I ax ye ef ye've anything to offer in the way of advice?" and the old Trapper turned his troubled and perplexed countenance toward the young man.

"The trouble of it is," answered the young man,

"he won't even make a noise. It seems to me, if you could make him begin to use his mouth, we could get some intelligent sound out of him by and by. Can't you make him make a noise?"

"I never seed anything that I couldn't git a noise out of," replied the Trapper, "ef it had a mouth, and I felt free to fully argue the p'int with it. Now, techin' the creetur' afore us, I don't feel at all oneasy on the matter of noise; and ef ye want noise, noise ye shall have."

"How are you going to get it out of him, John Norton?"

"I dunno; I dunno," said the Trapper. "There be many devices that can be more or less trusted to. The ramrod is a great help, ef it be of good hickory and jediciously used. I've poked a good many secrets out of the redskins with the eend of the ramrod. There's a spot jest below the bottom rib, nigh round to the backbone, where most of their devilments be hidden; and a few jedicious teches, put in a leetle 'arnestly, ef they be stubborn, is apt to git the secrets out of 'em."

"Try him with something else first," answered Herbert, laughing in spite of himself at the grave humor of the old Trapper's confession: "try him a little more earnestly with your voice. Idiots are often subject to fear, and can easily be frightened."

The Trapper, as our readers know, was a man of great stature. His head was large, and his features extraordinarily mobile. Age had taken the inelasticity of that fulness which youth gives the countenance, —

a fulness which, while it supplies the superficial beauty of physical proportion, is unable to receive into it and transmit through it the emotions of the soul. The years had, as it were, sweated the freshness from his face, and brought it to that fine condition which, when in repose, gives to the gazer the measure of the settled character; and which reflects, when the nature is stirred from within, the full intensity of the prevalent emotion.

In pleasant conversation his features were charming. In humorous passages they even assisted the rising mirthfulness. In grief they were settled as solemnity itself; while in combat, when the terrible strength and power of the man were thoroughly aroused, they were dreadful to behold. Indeed, so elastic were his features, and so quick were they to respond not merely to his emotions but even to his will, that they were, as were indeed all the other faculties of the man, to a remarkable degree, under his control. And no sooner had Herbert suggested that he should attempt to frighten the man in front of him out of his assumed dumbness, than, quick as a flash, he flung his rifle to the ground, and, with a single leap, cleared the distance between him and the man, and with a face as black as the face of wrath itself, and with a voice like thunder, and with a clutch like a vise on either shoulder as he leaped upon him, yelled, —

"BE YE A MAN?"

The yell which poured out of the creature's mouth was as terrific as the exclamation of the Trapper's had

been dreadful. It was the scream of animal fright, utterly without reason and without intelligence, save that which the apprehension of terror has in it. The face of the wretched being fairly shrivelled and shrunk until it was distorted with his awful fear. The mouth remained open when the yell had passed out of it. The eyes bulged in their sockets, and the sharp, pinched agony of the face showed through a skin colorless of blood. But on the countenance was not a trace of any intelligence beyond that which the deadly terror of a dumb creature can reveal.

Perhaps the Trapper was himself startled at the effect which his ruse had produced upon the unfortunate. Perhaps even his nerves interpreted the resultant reaction following so swift a movement and so startling an effect. But from whatever cause, he started suddenly back from the terrified creature, who was trembling to such an extent that he could scarcely stand, and contemplated him a moment with an expression in his eyes akin to pity. But, in an instant, he recovered the self-possession of his feeling, and, turning to Herbert, said, —

"The creetur act'ally thought I was in 'arnest, Henry. See him shake, boy. Lord! how we can fool folks, with the look of an eye and the sound of a voice. But I'm glad I've got him started; and though he hasn't act'ally got wordy yit, still, I wouldn't wonder ef we got about all he knows out of him afore we got through; but I don't conceit it'll be act'ally burdensome, ef we do, because" —

"I think you had better put your questions to him,

John Norton; he has got over shaking, and, if you have started his mind, you had better keep it going."

"Henry, ye talk like a jedge; yis, when ye git anything started, ye always want to keep it goin'. I got a feller started on the Ossawagatchie last fall. Ye see, he had a couple of my traps, not to speak of a marten, and I come agin him on a carry, and he seed me comin', and I conceit that I looked a good deal like the Jedgment Day. Afore I'd got the reason of his conduct, he had the start of me by a dozen jumps. It didn't take me long to git out from under the boat. My rifle was strapped in — an onreasonable act, Henry; don't ye ever strap yer rifle into yer boat, when ye are trailin' for skins, and ye are near the borders of the woods where the vagabonds have their housens. But I got the strap started pritty lively, and I drawed on him as he went over a knoll. It wasn't much of a chance, for the trees was thick; but the sound of the piece lightened him considerably, and the next dozen jumps that he made, as he went down the knoll arter the bullit passed him, averaged nigh on to six paces. Yis, they did, boy, for I measured them myself, as soon as I got over laughin'. I wished ye had been there" —

"But don't you think that you had better put your questions about the girl?"

"I am puttin' the questions, boy. Ye mustn't be in a hurry in a council, Henry. Now, ye see, while I've ben tellin' ye about the runnin' of the vagabond, I've had my eye on the creetur, and, ef I'm any jedge of looks, he's got a good deal interested himself; and ef

ye hadn't interrupted me, boy, I shouldn't have wondered a bit ef afore the vagabond had got to the foot of the knoll, he'd put in a question himself; for he didn't like the measurement of the leaps a bit better'n you did. Ye see, Henry," continued the Trapper, resuming the same tone in which he had been narrating his experience, "ye see, there isn't more'n one or two men, nor panthers neither, for that matter, that can jump eighteen feet. Now, ye take this creetur in front of us; I don't conceit that he's wuth a cent at jumpin'; for yé see, in order to make a good jump, ye've got to git yer legs into the right position, and the more legs ye have, the more painstakin' ye've got to be in the matter. Yis, yis, boy, I see him; natur' begins to work in him, and we'll have him jumpin', sure as jedgment. Keep quiet, boy, and see the reason of the convarse. Lord!" said the Trapper to himself, "this beats the signs of the redskins by the width of a bullit at least, when the shootin' is close."

While the Trapper had been carrying on his conversation, it was evident that into the idiotic mind, whose torpid consciousness he was so cunningly trying to excite, the idea of action and of rivalry had inserted itself; for he had lowered himself to the ground, and was now resting on his forelimbs, as if he were indeed an animal. And not only this, but had gathered himself into the precise posture which the panther himself would take when about to make his longest spring. Even the tremulousness of the body, which precedes all jumps of animals belonging to the cat species, had

taken possession of his frame, and there was every symptom that the crouching form, with whatever strength it was possessed, would soon be launched into the air.

"Ef he only had a tail, Henry!" said the Trapper to his companion, while he kept his eyes fastened steadily on the crouching body, betraying the humor of his feelings only by the sound of his voice. "Lord, boy, ef he only had a tail! He may be a fool, but he has sartinly studied the habits of the animil with which he consorts, until he's got their actin', motion for motion. Yis, it is a big jump," continued the Trapper, as if turning to his narration; "eighteen paces"—

A sort of growl interrupted him.

"As I was sayin', eighteen feet is a big jump, and the man in the skin knows it, as ye see, boy; and he knows the differenee atween eighteen paces and eighteen feet, too; and that is sartinly more l'arnin' than I give him credit for, to start with. Now, I'm going to pace off the distance that the vagabond jumped on the carry, arter he heerd the sound of the piece; and I doubt ef there's a man or panther that can jump it;" and, suiting the action to the word, the old Trapper paced the six paces, and, with the stock of his rifle, drew a clear, strong line in the pine stems to denote the boundary of the distance. It is doubtful if he would have drawn the mark so leisurely had he seen what was going on behind him; for, no sooner had the line been drawn through the pine stems, than the strange creature, whose appearance and action alike might justify the

description of half man and half panther, crouched with a sudden motion still lower, and, with a scream of fierce delight, launched himself into the air.

The Trapper was standing back towards him when the scream was delivered, and, though taken by surprise at the quickness of the response that his device had elicited, he spun himself half round with the quickness of a top, and, with a motion quick as an animal, with a half leap, taken at a stoop, dropped to the ground.

The result of this dexterous movement the reader can easily apprehend; for the man in the panther's skin passed clear over the Trapper in the curve of his tremendous leap, and the Trapper escaped the collision which would otherwise have been inevitable. It was, indeed, a tremendous leap; for it carried the performer not only to the line that the Trapper had drawn, but several feet beyond it. And when the strange creature rose to his feet, through the stolid idiocy of his countenance there plainly gleamed the look of triumph, and with it something of a human expression, as if, in excelling a deed of man, he had in some subtle measure faintly, at least, re-established his lost connection with his kind.

"Henry," said the Trapper, as he stepped aside, and eyed the distance that the strange being had covered, "Henry, the creetur's legs be of the best, or he never could have did it. For the jump be a big 'un: nigh on to twenty-two feet, as I jedge; and there ain't many legs that can cover that distance on

level ground, onless they hear somethin' in 'arnest behind 'em.

"I feel a good deal encouraged, Henry," said the Trapper to his companion, after he had contemplated the creature in front of him; "for we've sartinly got one idee into him, and I conceit that by a leetle keerful watchin' and jedicious managin' we'll git another. The p'int for us to git at is, has he seed the girl? Yis, that's the fust thing. Keep yer eye on him now, for the eye and not the ear is what we must depend on in startin' this trail. I was tellin' ye," continued the Trapper, dropping into the precise tone of narration which he had used in the previous description of the jumping of the thief on the carry, "I was tellin' ye, ye remember, Henry, of the vagabond I met on the carry with a couple of my traps on his back, not to speak of the pelt of a marten that belonged to me, and of the runnin' he did arter he seed I was comin', and I had lightened his heels with the sound of my piece. The fact is, boy, my mind isn't quite clear on this matter of runnin', for it don't lie in the build, and the length of the legs don't settle it, for I've seed in the matches on the edges of the settlements, a short-legged man beat a long-legged one. And even among the redskins it isn't the handsomest limbed runners that will fetch the tidin's the quickest. Boy, where does the runnin' power of a man lie?"

"I think," answered Herbert, "that the windpipe and lungs, rather than the muscles, often decide the race."

"I shouldn't wonder ef ye was right, Henry. Yis, it sartinly takes a big nostril to live out a race, or else a mouth that answers the same parpose. Now, panthers can't run; they can jump. Ye have seed that they can jump, but a dozen jumps settles 'em; and the reason is, they haven't any nose. They was made for springin', and not for racin'. And ef the bushes be scant, and she had a dozen rods the start, a nimble-footed girl could outrun one of 'em."

It is difficult to say whether Herbert more admired the adroitness with which the old Trapper had led his remarks up to their culmination in the pronouncing of the word "girl," which was done with the slightest of all emphasis, just enough to distinguish it from the words which preceded and followed it, or wondered at the result. The strange creature, ever since he had made his jump, had manifested a certain agitation. It seemed as if the sight of human faces and the sound of human voices, and their continued presence so nigh him, had created an influence which was penetrating through the terror of his mind, and insinuating subtle and magnetic currents into his sluggish consciousness; for his face, while not animated, at least revealed the possibility of becoming so. The night was still over it, but the watcher felt that the prophecy of a dawn was amid the gloom, and a dawn, too, that might come at any moment and with a burst of splendor when it came.

As the Trapper had continued his remarks, the strange being had kept his eyes fastened on his lips, as if by eye, as well as by ear, he sought to establish

connection between his understanding and a method of expression to which he had been so long unfamiliar. That the attempt was not unsuccessful the result proved. That his mind had formed connection with human speech sufficiently strong to receive impressions from spoken words was on the instant made manifest. For, when the Trapper had pronounced the word "girl," even as the sound of the word fell on his ear, a flush came to his face; a cry leaped from his mouth, and the furred right arm swept into the air, and, for a moment, fixed itself in a gesture of direction.

The joy of Herbert was so great, for he caught the significance both of the creature's exclamation and its accompanying gesture, that a cry of delight escaped him. The Trapper showed less emotion, but felt equal delight.

"He's seed her, boy! The Lord be praised! He's seed her, that's sartin as jedgment; and twenty Moravian missioners, with all their preachments, couldn't make the direction plainer'n he has by that sweep of his arm."

"Let us go. We've got enough out of him to tell us the direction. Let us to the boat, and be off."

"Steady, boy. The scent is cold yit; and ye'll run over it, or lose it altogether, ef ye make the pace hot. We know that he has seed the girl. We don't know when; and we don't know whether he seed her living, or seed her dead."

"How can he tell us? how can he tell us?" exclaimed the Trapper's companion. "The fool can't understand our sympathies, or know the value of time."

"Leash the pups, boy, and hold 'em a while in hand, I tell ye, or ye'll sartinly sp'il the hunt in yer eagerness. The fool is doin' well, considerin' his gifts; and is fetchin' us forrad faster'n yer wit and yer larnin' could do it. His eye is kindlin', and I begin to conceit that there was reason in the Lord's actin', when he caused ye to miss him in the balsam thicket. Yis, his eye is kindlin', and the winder never looked bright yit onless there was fire in the cabin. The eye, boy, whether it be in the head of the man, or the animil, was put there for another parpose than for the man inside to see out of; it was put there for them who be outside to see into. Now, do ye stand, boy, and watch the reason of my actin'. Ye axed me to give ye some sign-talkin' the other day, and wondered how it could be did. I couldn't give it to ye then; for a man can't talk by words, nor by signs, neither, onless he's somethin' to say; and I had nothin' to say. But now, I've got somethin' to say; and I'll show ye how the redskins and the hunters of the Western plains talk by signs when they be ignorant of words."

With this, the old Trapper set his rifle against the pine-tree, and, placing himself some dozen feet in front of the man who was dressed in the skin of the panther, proceeded to address him in the picturesque and impressive language of pantomime, with which his life and travels among the Indians and frontiersmen — for his journeyings had extended to the base of the Rocky Mountains — had made him a master.

There is no fashion of human communication, as we

have said, so picturesque and impressive as that of pantomime, or of physical acting. It is the language of personality in its highest state of expressiveness. Little are personalities seen in the bare movements of the lips, when from the moving but concealed tongue, mechanically, without soul, the words come forth. Whatever diamond-like significance the word may itself contain, as the lip pronounces it, the diamond's gleam is not in the utterance. The mind of the listener must take the cold stone, and through the friction of his own imagination, strike the blaze into it. Hence eloquence is not in the man, but in the multitude that hear the man. And not only talent but genius — and genius of the highest type — has more than once confessed to its own inability, when brought face to face with unresponsive hearers. Imagination must speak to imagination. Reason must address itself to reason. Thought must have audience of thought; and fire must be mingled with kindred flame, or ever through the dull, cold process of verbal speech, the poetry and strength of the nature can be manifest.

The Trapper, as we have said, placed himself in front of the strange being, who had from some freak of insanity left the companionship of his kind, and by imitation of covering and habits alike had become associated with animals; and who, it was evident, in his wandering through the woods, had met the girl after whom they were searching; but when or where, or whether living or dead, neither the Trapper nor his companion knew. And this knowledge, upon which

the method and direction of their future search would depend, the Trapper proposed to elicit, not by language addressed to the ear, but by that more vivid and impressive method of communicating thought which appealed clearly, strongly, and, at times, even startlingly, to the understanding through the eye.

The eyes of the two men were now fastened upon each other. For a moment the Trapper did not move. It was as if the gathering magnetism of his nature was being concentrated in his gaze alone, that through it should go forth a current that should start an answering current in the other. Their eyes met. Their eyes mingled. The orbs of the Trapper glowed steady and strong. The orbs of the other shifted and stirred uneasily in their sockets for an instant, flashed and kindled intermittently, and then settled into steadiness of vision, and met the interrogative gaze with one receptively submissive.

What is this strange, subtle force in the stronger nature which brings the weaker into alliance with it — at times even into submission to it?

Henry, who watched with keenest interest the manœuvrings of the Trapper to capture the attention of the other and fix it upon himself, marvelled as he perceived how quickly one could conquer another. Never had he seen the Trapper look as he now looked. Never had he seen the greatness that was in him appear so evident. He stood erect, lifted to his fullest height, his head thrown slightly back, his nostrils, under the exciting passages of the outgoing force,

dilating, his eyes glowing with benevolent, indeed, but all-controlling emotion. The force that was needed was not the force required from the strong to conquer the weak, but the force that is required from the living to quicken the dead; for the mind upon which the Trapper was called to exercise his power was not only dead to human contact, but had for years been buried beneath another organism which had formed its rude and barbarous stratum above it. To resurrect the man from underneath the animal, and move his understanding in the long-unused forces of human thought; to fasten it upon dates and names, conditions and appearances, and make the comprehension adequate to the emergency, — this was the miracle which the Trapper attempted; and the first movement to the accomplishment of the miracle was to fix the wandering mind, and into it insert one idea. And so the Trapper, having by his gaze conquered the gaze of the other, lifted his right hand in front of him, and, pointing suggestively directly at the other, said, in a voice so clear, strong, and condensed that it seemed to go through the one to whom it was spoken, —

"*Girl!*"

CHAPTER XVIII.

As the word girl, clearly and strongly spoken, escaped the Trapper's lips, the man in front of him visibly started, and Herbert discerned an inclination of the head, as if, voluntarily or involuntarily, he not only understood the desire of the Trapper, but the object of his proceedings.

The Trapper, confident that he had at last made positive connection with the lingering, perhaps we should say, the re-awakening intelligence of the singular creature, proceeded at once in the motions of his pantomime. The first fact he wished to ascertain, now that he knew the girl had been seen, was the time or date of their meeting. The old man knew that he could not have met the girl that day, and therefore that he must count backwards in order to fix the time. Whether the feeble mind of the man would apprehend, and be able to follow his voiceless speech, he could not tell; but, hoping that such a fortunate result might be reached, he addressed himself at once to the task.

And, first, he lifted his hand, and pointed with his finger directly at the sun; then he traced the line of its course backward toward the east, and by a look and a motion of his hands, palms outward, toward the east, fixed it there. Then he paused. Then over the earth, with groping motions of his hands, and his eyes shut,

he spread out the darkness. Opening his eyes, he went through the signs of a person trying to see in the dark. In the gloom above, with movements of his fingers, he traced the stars, and then with his voice he sounded the hoot of the owl as it booms from the pines amid the gloom of night; the cry of the loon, prolonged and finely drawn out as it comes through the evening damp, and other sounds familiar to the night-time and the dusk, — sounds of the air, and sounds of the water, — until Herbert marvelled that so plain and unmistakable a description of the night season could be made by one standing on a beach with the noon-day glare above him.

The strange creature standing in front of him followed each motion of the pantomime with vigilant eye; and when the voice sounding the night-calls of Nature broke on his ear, it was evident to both of the men that were watching him that the picturesque and vivid description had accomplished its purpose, and that the man well knew that the Trapper had measured the portion of the day in whose light they were standing, and the night back of it. Confident of this, the Trapper paused again, and again said, in the same clear, strong, and condensed tone, "*Girl!*"

But the face of the strange being remained steadfast in its expression, and it was evident to the Trapper that if he ever gave a sign, it would be only when he had measured to the date when he and the lost one had met.

Without pausing an instant, without intermitting the powerful magnetism of his gaze on the object in front

of him, with freer motions and more vivid picturing, again did the Trapper describe the coming of morning: and so wonderfully fine was his acting, and so accurate was his knowledge of nature in its natural changes, that the sun seemed to rise before Herbert's eyes, the clouds to crimson, the lake to gleam, the morning breeze to rise, and the waves, urged by them, to break on the beach. And then, to complete the perfect presentation of the morning time, out of the mouth of the Trapper came the call of all morning birds. The owl, grumbling, hid himself in the uppermost boughs of the pine. Down the same tree ran the squirrel chattering; and so perfect was the imitation that, as the air broke into noisy fragments, Herbert could scarcely believe that above his head the little sprightly creature was not actually perched, calling noisily to his mate through the grove. The deer came down, fed, drank, and retired. The fawns capered over the sands, and disappeared in the bush. At the mouth of the inlet the trout jumped and splashed. The lilies began to close, and their white flowers hid themselves within their green lobes. Never was a truer picture of morning sketched; never the coming of the day, with all its splendor and its sounds of waking life, more truly delineated.

Again the Trapper paused, and again the same word, clearly and strongly pronounced as before, with a strong interrogation in the tone. And as if to reward the Trapper for the splendid effort he was making, to stir the sluggish mind in front of him with a thrill of

anxious consciousness, and to make whatever thread or filament of intelligence there yet remained responsive to his touch, no sooner had the word been pronounced the third time than the strange creature, dressed in a panther's skin, in front of him, *slowly but decidedly shook his head.*

"God be praised!" exclaimed the Trapper, as he half turned to Herbert; "the fool begins to think. Whether she be livin' or dead, is not sartin; but ef nothin' happens, and the Lord helps the creetur a leetle, we'll sartinly fix the hour when he seed her."

Again he swept his hand into the air, and called down the darkness over the earth. Again the stars came forth, and the sounds of night echoed over the waters; and again, when he paused and repeated the word with more positive movement of his voice, again did the man who was following him give the negative motion of his head.

By this time the tension was so great, and the excitement of the scene had so communicated itself to Herbert, that the sweat actually stood in drops on his face; and, when the head shook again, a sound like a groan escaped him.

"Never mind, boy, never mind," said the Trapper, as he again lifted himself to a lofty pose, while not a change came to the muscles of his own splendid face, lighted as it was with the effort of mind he was making. "Never mind, boy. The trail leads back furder than I thought, but we'll find the girl, and the Lord with her, too, at the eend of it."

Again the motions followed, — now easy, now swift, — the voice accompanying the motion; and the morning by the pantomime again broke over the world · but not as it breaks when the sun rises with uncloudeá brightness; for the Trapper, even in the act of describing it, recalled that the second morning back had come to the wood with fog on the waters and clouds overhead. And as the Trapper continued his description, the woods dripped with dampness; the fogs rolled heavily down the lake; the fleece of the vapor clung to the tree-tops and the shores. And when the sun came through, it came strugglingly, with flashes and lanes of light that came and disappeared — shone and were swallowed up — until at last the potent orb, mighty in splendor, triumphed. And, with the sun standing above the crest of the eastern mountains, day flashed into splendor, and the tardy morning flushed and kindled with unimpeded brilliance.

This time the Trapper himself was astounded; for before he had had time to repeat the magic word with which he had first enchained the attention of the object he was addressing, the strange creature clapped his hands together, and with motions of affirmation which shook him from head to foot, as he bowed in his excited eagerness, said — the first word he had doubtless spoken for years in human speech, —

"Girl!"

"Glory to God!" exclaimed the Trapper. "The fool has his gifts, Henry, and the parpose of the Lord will yit be sarved."

"Dead or living?" said Henry, with a face tight in every muscle, and actually whitening under the strain of the exciting scene and its climax.

The Trapper made no reply save that which lay in his acting. With motion slow and solemn as motion might be, and with a face whose every feature was settled with grief, he sketched a bier: sketched it so vividly that had it been in actual preparation for the solemn reception of the stiffened form, it could not have been more impressive. And, when the bier had been made at his feet, he turned and walked a few paces aside, and, stooping, lifted a body and brought it to the imaginary bier, and laid it thereon, and straightened its proportions as one might straighten the form of a woman and not of a man; for the dress was arranged even to the feet, and the hair tenderly lifted from the shoulder and from the bosom where it had been wandering, and smoothed as tenderly back from the face and off the brow as if grief, solicitous in the discharge of the solemn proprieties, was bending over a beloved form. And when all was done, and Herbert and the man could almost see the bier, and the girl straightened in death lying on it, the Trapper rose from his knees, and looked at the man in front of him. No words could put such an interrogation as the eyes and features of the Trapper put to the man clothed in panther skins, as he straightened himself above that imaginary bier.

Slowly, with something like a startled look in his own eyes, with a slight knitting of the brow, the strange creature *shook his head*,

Herbert, unconsciously, perhaps, as the last scene was being enacted in the pantomime, had drawn nigher to the Trapper, and was now standing within arm's reach of him. As the man slowly shook his head, the Trapper turned towards Herbert, and the eyes of the old man and the young man met. The Trapper slowly stretched forth his hand; the hand of Herbert as deliberately met it; and the two, with steady faces, but with eyes not ashamed to confess their solemn gladness, stood for a minute holding each other's hand.

Three mornings before the girl had been seen, and alive!

For a moment the two men thus stood; then they released their hands, and the Trapper said, —

"The council be over, Henry, and the time for actin' be come. The girl is off here to the south-east, for that be the direction that he p'inted out, and I don't conceit it be fur."

"Do you know the woods to the south-east, John Norton?" interrupted Herbert.

"Know the woods to the south-east!" exclaimed the Trapper. "There be no p'int in the woods, from the Horicon to the St. Lawrence, or from the Mohawk to the Canada line, that I don't know, boy. I not only know the woods, but I know the waters; for I sartinly doubt that there be a stream big enough for a mink to fish on, or a pond that would hold a beaver, — or a muskrat, for that matter, — that I haven't left the markin's of my traps on. For the fur has been scarce, for the last ten year, and trappers be many; and a man

who would live by his trappin' couldn't keep in his cabin."

"Where do you think the girl is?" asked Herbert.

"It was three mornin's ago that the fool seed her — that's sartin. Now, there's no signs that he has a boat on the waters, or would get into one, ef he had it; and while his legs be good un's, and I don't doubt he could kiver a goodly distance atween sun and sun, ef he put reason into his legs, yit it's not likely that his legs had any reason in 'em. And, therefore, I conceit that his walkin' would be a good deal like a moose in his feedin', when the feedin' be scarce, — this way and that, and a good deal of t'other. And it don't stand to reason, seein' as how he has leetle sense, that he would strike a bee-line for anywhere; for it takes a man of good jedgment to walk straight. Leastwise, I've noted that few men could do it in the woods."

"You think, then," said Henry, interrupting him again, "that the girl is off here to the south-east, and not many miles away?"

"That's it exactly, Henry," returned the Trapper; "she's off here to the south-east, for sartin, for the fool don't know enough to lie, and in that he's favored beyond some. I sartinly doubt, Henry," said the Trapper, emphatically, "ef the girl be a dozen miles from this beach."

"With nothing but the direction to guide you, have you any idea you can find her, John Norton?"

"Sartinly," said the Trapper, — "sartinly we can find her. The direction is everything in strikin' a trail,

Henry. For, ef that be right, and nothin' happens, and ye keep goin', ye'll hit it sure as jedgment, leastwise, ef yer eyes be good. And when ye've hit the trail of the girl, ye've found the girl."

"I don't understand that, John Norton," responded Herbert. "She may have gone a great distance since the man in the panther skin saw her."

"Keerful, boy, keerful," said the Trapper, "ye're losin' yer jedgment in yer 'arnestness. I dare say she's kept movin' a good deal; for it ain't in human natur' to sit down in the woods in one spot, especially if ye be alone. A lost man is an oneasy man, and he keeps goin' till his legs give out, or his heart. And the legs hold out longer than the heart, as I have obsarved.

"Ye see, Henry, the girl be lost — she be alone in the woods. The vagabonds have left her alone to die. The power of man be ag'in her, and the power of God be shown through the power of man, and she be worried, no doubt, and she be wandering, like a leetle fawn that has lost its mother. I've seed 'em, Henry, and a pitiful sight it is, too, boy, to see the leetle innercent things go creepin' and crawlin' through the bush bleetin' and callin' ontil they be too feeble to go furder, and they sorter tumble down in a leetle heap to die. Ah, me! many be the leetle spotted things I've found wanderin' so, and I've had 'em come up — yis, Henry, I've act'ally had 'em come up to my very side, and had 'em take my finger in their leetle mouths in their hunger; and I carried 'em home in my arms, and fed 'em and laughed till the tears come, to see 'em caper

round the cabin. And the pups, — Lord, Henry, the pups knowed the difference atween a leetle fawn and an old buck. Sport — you know Sport be a frisky dog — land-a-massy! ye oughter seen him play with 'em. And Rover — Rover, ye know, Henry, be an 'arnest sort of a dog, — he'd lie on the hearth and sorter look at 'em out of his eyes, pretendin' to be half asleep. Ah, me! how many be the haps of natur'. And the lone ones that be lost need comfortin', and the Lord forgits at times, or else his creeturs forgit that orter be more mindful."

"So you think," answered Henry, "that the girl has been walking in circles as it were?"

"That's it. That's it exactly, boy," responded the Trapper. "Ye see she couldn't walk any other way, being lost and ignorant of the wood; and where the man in the skins here seed her, we shall see her, — leastwise, nigh there."

"Have you any idea where he saw her, John Norton?"

"That's it, Henry, I've been thinking of that. Ye see, there is a lake over here to the southeast, — and a lonely lake it be, too. I doubt ef many trappers have ever sot a trap on it. The half-breed knowed it; for I had a scrimmage with him once on the north shore of it, for he put a bullet through the back of my shanty one night that went through jest about where my head ought to be. But I'd smothered my fire in a leetle too much punk that night, and the wind shifted arter I'd turned in, and the shanty was a good deal

like a Dutch woman's oven when the wind is northeast and the chimney isn't more'n half open. And the smoke sort of druv me out, — leastwise, it had skewed me round so that I laid jest crosswise of the way I should have laid ef the fire had acted naterally. The smoke saved me, Henry. Leastwise, that's the way me and the pups understood it. But I turned out, and sorter got even with him afore mornin'; for the next time he fired, — which the vagabond did, conceiting he would make double sure I was lyin' in behind a spruce log, — I opened on him by the blaze of his piece, and then I give him the other barrel by the sound of his runnin' as he went towards the beach; and there was a good trail of blood on the leaves next mornin'. I heerd the next spring that he laid two weeks in a hunter's cabin on the head waters of the Hudson, and was a good deal interested in splints and yarbs while he stayed there."

"And you think," interrupted Henry, "that the girl is on that lake?"

"The signs p'int in that direction, Henry. And I put it to ye, ef they don't."

"They certainly do, John Norton," replied the young man; "and it don't seem to me that we should lose any time in getting off. What shall we do with the man in the skin here? Shall we take him along with us? Could he help us any?"

"I don't conceit he would, Henry," answered the Trapper, after a moment's consideration. "Ye see ye can't depend on him for anythin' but jumpin' and

scratchin', and them be gifts that are of no account on a trail. Ye see, the creeter has consorted with the panthers until he has forgot himself, and conceits he is a panther himself, and ef he fell into any of their habits, and begun to cut up any of their capers on us—

"Well, ye see, Henry, I don't like the animils that he belongs to, and my piece goes a little too easy at the sight of the fur to make it actually safe to have the hair in sight. Not that I would shoot a human bein', boy, onless he was up to his divilments; but the way a man dresses makes a good deal of difference with the man; and a panther's skin is an onreasonable garment for a human bein' to put on, and I conceit that he better be left to scratch and jump as his foolishness stirs him."

"He is a pitiful object to contemplate," replied Herbert, looking at the strange creature, who still remained standing, gazing with eyes that roamed from one to the other of them; "it seems dreadful to leave him here to the fate of his terrible delusion."

"Friend," said the Trapper, addressing himself to the object of the conversation, "friend, we must be goin'. I sartinly doubt ef ye understand a word I am sayin'; but I don't see as that should make any difference with the talkin', for ye have did us a sarvice; and it's proper that ye should be thanked for it."

The Trapper paused a moment, and carefully studied the countenance that was turned full upon him, and then he resumed: "I've studied the signs of natur' for years, and few be the changes that come to the 'arth, or the sky, or the water, that my eye hasn't noted; and

I've noted that there be a beginnin' to all changes. The dawn comes afore the mornin', and the dusk afore the night. The water changes its color afore it rains, and the warm and the cold can be seen a day in advance in the shinin' of the stars. And onless my eye deceives me, there be changes comin' to yer face, friend, that mean somethin'. The devil has sartinly had ye for years, and it may be the devil may keep ye yit for years to come; but it looks to me as ef the Lord in his marcy was takin' a hand on yer side, and yer wits might be comin' to ye. Ye sartinly have sarved him well this time, whatever may be the tantrums ye may have cut up in the past. And ye have 'arned help, ef I am any jedge, and I don't conceit that the Lord lets a man sarve him, and puts all the payment off for etarnity. And ef anything happens to ye for the better, and ye do come to yer wits, and ye need a cabin and a table, jest remember that old John Norton will take ye in, skin or no skin. And now, Henry, let us be goin'."

So saying, the Trapper turned toward the boat, which, in his eagerness to be gone, his companion had already reached and launched, and was in the act of seating himself at the oars, when the Trapper reached the stern of the frail craft, and lifted the paddle preparatory to entering. An instant sufficed for the act, and he was settling himself to his seat, and the boat had already begun to move, when a low moan, human in its piteousness, checked the movements of the boatmen, and turned their eyes in the direction of the sound.

CHAPTER XIX.

AND this is what they saw: —

The man who was clothed in the panther's skin was standing on the very edge of the water, with his hands stretched towards them, with the gesture of supreme supplication. His face had lost the stolid animal-like look which had disguised his humanity; or, to be more exact, was in the act of losing it. It was as if the human soul, which had been long dead, had heard the voice of the Master of life who was calling to it to come forth, and had already appeared at the door of the sepulchre, — not natural in appearance as yet, for the pallor still resisted the coming of the warm currents to the cheek, and instead of the garments of those who live with the living, it stood wrapped in the winding-sheet of the dead. So the soul of this unfortunate creature — the soul of his humanity — seemed standing, as it were, only just within the enclosure of his countenance; standing, as yet uncertain what to do; not as yet fully possessed of its senses, but struggling to re-assert its long-lost mastery over itself, and over the face which it had once animated and glorified with its beautiful and majestic presence. Thus the man stood on the beach, with his feet washed by the water, his hands stretched imploringly toward them, and his face changing in its expression from the animal into the human.

"I seed it comin', Henry; yis, I seed it comin', boy, when I was talkin' to him, but I didn't conceit it would come so soon; but the Lord be quicker in the movements of his marcy than man be in his faith, and he never wrought a deed of deliverance yit, to them that be bound in their senses or their bodies, that it didn't come as a kind of surprise. Yis, the Lord sartinly works in secret, and ye can't tell jest where he's hidden, and he onkivers his ambushments of marcy quicker than a Huron does the ambushment of his devilment. It's a great mistake, boy, to conceit that the Lord be slow in his actin', for though he waits till the jedicious time has come, and ye can't hurry him, yit when his counsellin' be over, and the moment has come for the deed, the deed be did, and it be did so quick that it sets all yer guessin' to nought."

"What shall we do, John Norton?" cried Herbert. "The man is coming to his reason, isn't he? What shall we do?',

"Nothin' yit, boy; nothin' yit. The Lord be managin' the case, and ye've nothin' to do but to lie on yer oars. Keep yer eyes open, boy, for though my head be whitenin', and I've noted a good many queer things yit I sartinly never seed such a sight as this, and it makes a man feel a good deal as ef he was standin' by a grave, or a cradle, to see a man that's been dead in his manhood bein' born ag'in, and that's jest what's goin' on there on the beach, as nigh as I can jedge."

It was indeed a strange and solemn spectacle. Above, the sky was bright with the brightness of day. On

all sides Nature showed at her loveliest aspect. And on the beach, with the Trapper and his companion only for spectators, a man who had been insane for years, with an insanity whose delusion had separated him from his kind, was coming once more to the enjoyment of his reason. Human emotion, which for years had been within that breast an unfelt feeling, once more began to stir. Intelligence, which for years had been banished from the eyes, once more began to fill the orbs with its fine discriminating light. The lips began to move, as if within the tongue, so long unaccustomed to speak, was striving to get back its facility of motion. And as these efforts of reviving nature were being made under the impulse of what could not be less than Divine power, the blood began to come and go in flushes over the countenance, and the body, in its poses, began to assume the bearing appropriate to the human form. But the effort was intense. The demon within was being cast out; but the devilishness of his energy was manifest in the violence and rending which his unwilling exit caused. The countenance was contorted. The muscles of the face worked and twitched. Froth stood on the lips. The body began to be convulsed, and, with a mighty spasm, the form was dashed upon the beach, where it lay grovelling.

"John Norton!" exclaimed Henry, as the terrible manifestation proceeded, "this is a dreadful spectacle!"

"Call it a blessed sight, boy," responded the Trapper as he backed the boat with his paddle toward the

beach, "call it a blessed sight. The devil be sartinly goin' out, but he be goin' out as he went out in the days when the Scriptur' was writ. It may be that the tech of a human hand and the moistenin' of a leetle water will help the Lord in his endeavors. Leastwise, it will do no hurt; and ef I can do no more than keep the sand from his eyes and the grit from his mouth, it'll be somethin' to have did to a feller-bein' in his sufferin'."

While he had been thus speaking, he had been backing his boat toward the beach; and as it touched the sand he stepped out, and proceeded toward the prostrate form that lay on the shore. He went to his side and laid a strong grasp on his shoulders, and steadied him; and then he took him by the wrists and held his hands apart that he might not rend himself, and bent over him as the strong bend over the weak — even the strong in the fulness of health, when they bend over the sick, imparting, by the motion and the contact, the vitality that is needed.

"Fetch me some water, boy," said the Trapper, calling to Herbert, who still kept his place in the boat, "slip yer cup from yer belt, and bring me some water and dash it in his face. It may be the shock of natur' will bring him out of his spasm; for the struggle be sore, and was it not the Lord's doin's I would sartinly say that the sperit would be torn from his body; but the Lord never kills when he ondertakes to save, and the man will live."

The motions of Herbert had been as quick as agility

could make them, and when the Trapper had closed his saying the young man was standing, cup in hand, over the convulsed form.

"Dash the water in his face, Henry!" exclaimed the Trapper, "dash it in, never mind the wettin'. The wettin' won't hurt, and the dryin' can come arterward."

The young man complied, and, with a sudden motion of his hand dashed the water full in the face of the sufferer. The scream which issued from the mouth of the tortured creature was of so fierce and terrible a sort that the ears which heard might never forget it. But with that terrible cry the demon passed out of the man. The legs straightened in their weakness. The muscles of the arm relaxed their tension, and, as the Trapper unclasped his hands from the wrists, sank motionless by his side. The head drooped till it rested, as the head of a man that is dead, on the Trapper's lap. The pulse still beat, the heart still kept its motion, but the prostration that followed the struggle and the agony was profound.

"Is he dead, John Norton?" asked Herbert.

"No, boy," answered the Trapper, "he's beginnin' to live. He be weak as a babe because his strength has been the strength of evil, and the evil be gone out of him, and his weakness be the weakness of one just born. Bring me a towel from the boat, and let me wipe his face free of the water and the sand; for when he opens his eyes I would have him look clean and nateral-like."

For several minutes the Trapper busied himself with

his kindly offices. He bathed the face, and dried it with motions as careful and tender as a skilful nurse uses with a patient that is lying in the extremity of mortal weakness. He lifted the head of the man on to his own breast, parted his hair in human fashion, and, with his great fingers stroked it backward, endeavoring to give it its proper appearance. He bathed the hands and made them cleanly, and placed them one on the other in decent fashion. And then he waited — waited pátiently and without a doubt — for strength to come back to the life that had been born. Waited, saying not a word. And over the three the sun shone brightly. The blue sky stretched its blue dome. The wind played with mellow sounds through the pine-tops; and silence — the silence of a lonely lake-shore — pervaded, as it seemed to the two, with the sweet mercy of heaven, rested on them, as if expectant.

At last the eyes of the man slowly unclosed. Dim at first were the uncovered orbs; but to them, gradually, as if returning from a great distance, came back that marvellous light which makes man, man. He opened his eyes, — opened them and lay still, looking out upon the world, as if then he beheld it for the first time. He saw the sky; he saw the trees; he saw the bright light of the bright day. He saw the water stretching out in front of him so clear and so blue. Saw them as one who had not seen them ever before.

But after a while a look of recognition came to his eyes, and the light within, sharpened through the

dimness, and memory that had so long slept, woke and began to connect the sights that he saw with the sights that he had seen long years before; and never to his dying day will Herbert forget the look of those eyes when the recognition was complete, and the world that he had forgotten the man knew once more.

And then — and this was the first motion that the man made — the will made its connection with the eyes, and the man turned them slowly, and fixed them steadily upon Herbert's face. Long did their gaze stay steadfast. Long did he peruse with puzzled scrutiny the young man's countenance, and then he moved his head, slid it down from the broad breast on which it rested to the fore-arm and knee of the Trapper, and, having adjusted it there, gazed upward into the great, grave, strong face bowed above him. Long he studied it feature by feature: studied it at first as a little child studies the mother's face, scarcely comprehending it; but as he gazed the soul grew strong within; the spirit moved itself aright; a sweet, fine light crept over the features like the strange gleam in iridescent glass, and he said, — and the words came feebly but clearly uttered, — speaking to the face above him, he said, —

"Art thou God?"

The Trapper answered, —

"Only thy brother, friend."

Herbert turned away.

After a few moments the man, whose gaze had not moved itself from the Trapper's face, said, —

"Who are you, then?"

"I've had a good many names," answered the Trapper, "for the redskins have a gift in givin' names; and I've consorted a good deal with knaves and honest ones alike, and one tribe has gi'n me one name and another tribe has gi'n me another name, and I've seed times that I was a leetle onsartin jest what my name was; but the name that was gi'n me fust, and the name which I know myself by, and the name the Lord knows me by, leastwise ef he be at all keerful in the matter of names, which them that be of my color know me by; yis, is John Norton."

The man made no motion and gave no sign for a full minute, but gazed steadily at the face above him. He was weak, that was evident; weak with a weakness that was departing, — but departing slowly. His powers were at the ebb. The incoming tide-lift of the great ocean was setting in, and the level waters began to feel the prophecy of the coming flood; but they stood motionless as yet. Then he said, —

"Thou art good."

"Off and on," responded the Trapper; "off and on, friend. Nothin' exactly sartin, onless it be the matter of sightin' when meat is scarce, or a vagabond gits within range; but beyend that nothin' is sartin."

The man didn't understand him; — at least, the faintest look of bewilderment came to his eyes. Perhaps he was not strong enough yet to get the sequence of connected thought or sense the quaintness of humorous speech. In a moment he asked, —

"Where am I?"

"This be Sandy P'int," answered the Trapper. "The redskins called it 'the P'int where the winds always play;' and the redskins never gin a name to a man or a spot yit that didn't fit the natur' of the man or the spot. Yis; this be Sandy P'int; and a cheerful spot it be, too."

"How did I come here?"

"Yer trail has been a long un, and a crooked un, too," answered the Trapper, "as I conceit, and I sartinly don't know the windin's of it; and so when ye ax me how ye come here, I'm obleeged to tell ye I don't know. Be ye strong enough to set up?"

"I am," responded the man, and suiting his motion to his speech, he slowly lifted himself from his reclining posture, and, bracing himself with either palm on the ground, he sat erect.

"What is this I have on?" he exclaimed, and he looked with startled eyes at the skin that was fitted to his person.

"Ye have the devil's hide for sartin," said the Trapper; "yis, ye have the devil's hide on ye. I've sighted on the fur a hundred times, — and ye've stolen the skin of a panther for yer kiverin'."

"Where are my clothes?" was the sharp interrogation.

"Friend," said the Trapper, "ye be a leetle easy in yer questionin', for though I know as much as a man should of my gifts, yit when ye ax me about yer clothes ye have axed me more'n I can tell ye."

"Take off this dreadful thing!" he cried; "take off this dreadful thing. This is not the garment of a human being; it is the covering of a beast."

"True as jedgment," answered the Trapper; "ye've hit it square on the head, and that's sayin' a good deal for a man that's used the piece as leetle as ye have. Yis, yer kiverin' be that of a beast, and a miserable beast at that; but when ye ax me to strip it off, ye speak in yer haste. For though it be an onhuman kiverin', yit breeches and waistcoats aint plenty in the woods, and, onless ye mean to take to the water, ye'd sartinly best keep the miserable kiverin' round ye till somethin' can be did."

"What can be done?" exclaimed the man; "what can be done that I may be delivered from this dreadful apparel?"

"Boy," said the Trapper, speaking to Herbert, "here be need of a counsel; for the man has put it to us, and ye heerd his question, and I ax ye what can be did? For the man is sartinly in distress, and there isn't a store within ninety mile. I have some breeches in the cabin; but the cabin be fur off, and the man be here in his nakedness. Have ye anything to say, boy?"

"The blanket is in the boat," answered Herbert, "and he can have my jacket. Can we not make him a pair of pantaloons out of the blanket?"

"I won't answer for the cut, boy," answered the Trapper; "no, I won't answer for the cut. But the cloth be firm, and the color be a good 'un. Bring the blanket, boy, and the deer thongs in the starn of the

boat. The man has come to his reason, and he shall have the clothin' of a man, though I won't answer for the cut."

In an hour the man was decently clothed. The Trapper, assisted by Herbert, had done his best, and a serviceable garment, at least, was the result. And when the man had cast aside the covering which he had assumed in his insanity, and clothed himself in the garments that had been made for and given to him, he seemed to have returned fully to himself. He spoke with intelligence; he acted with propriety. And it was evident that he had come forth from his delusion, not only to the fulness of restored human understanding, but with utter forgetfulness of the wretched condition in which he had so long been enthralled. The Trapper and Herbert had prepared a meal, and, with them, the man had partaken of it; eating in silence, indeed, but with decorum, and even with the manner of a gentleman. Nor was his bearing lacking nobility, or his countenance devoid of manly beauty. And the two friends felt that, whether they should find the one for whom they were searching or not, directed of God they had found another of his creatures, that had indeed been lost, but now was found.

At the conclusion of the meal, the Trapper, speaking to the man, said, —

"Friend, ye know my name and the name of Henry here, and it may be ye would like to know our arrand. There has been a boat load of vagabonds in the woods, and they come in on the devil's own arrand, for they

had stole a girl from her home in the North country, and they brought her into the woods to leave her in some lonely spot that she might die. Henry and me are hunting their trail, and the signs sartinly p'int to this lake, and somewhere beyend. The knaves themselves have got off; and there's a leetle more powder in my horn than there would naterally have been had we met. Yis, the knaves have got off, but the girl be left somewhere in the woods, and by this time she must be nigh starvin', onless she has died of fright or some evil mishap has come to her. I conceit she be off here to the southeast, and I thought that, perhaps, ye had run agin her in yer wanderin's. Friend, have ye seed the girl?"

"I have not," said the man.

As the negative came from the man's lips so promptly and decidedly; giving such a direct contradiction to what he had intimated in response to the pantomime, Henry involuntarily started, and threw a glance of sharp interrogation at the speaker.

But the face of the Trapper changed not a single line of its expression. His eyes kept the calmness of their look, and his features their tranquillity. After a moment's pause he said, —

"Yer answer be straight, friend, and ef yer memory be good the boy and me would start from this P'int with heavier hearts than we hoped to. May I ax ye where ye have been for the last four or five days?"

An expression of pain came to the face of the man,

and, after a moment's hesitating pause, he said, speaking to both, —

"Gentlemen, I do not know where I have been for the last four or five days. I do not know where I have been for the last four or five years. I do not know the date of the year, or the name of the month, or what week, or what day I am living in. The past seems to me like a dream in which everything that might be seen was in blank blackness. I remember a house that was mine. I remember a wife that died. I remember a child — but beyond that all is blank. Where I have been; what I have been; how long I have been in this trance, I do not know. I cannot tell where I was yesterday; where I was when you found me. I cannot tell you a thing. Would to God I could; for I see by your face that you are doing a deed of mercy, and that you hoped to get help from me."

"Henry," said the Trapper, "the ways of the Lord be past findin' out. Had he come to his reason sooner we wouldn't have knowed what we know. Had he come but a leetle later, we would not have been here to have helped him in his feebleness. The seasons of doin' and not doin', of happenin' and not happenin', be not in man's hands. The Lord brought us to this P'int, and the Lord kept us from goin'; and I sartinly believe that he ordered the comin' and the goin' jediciously. One of his creeturs has found himself, and we with His help shall find the other. And now, friend, it's time that Henry and me be goin', for the girl be alone, and it may be the girl be dyin'. I don't

conceit that ye will be of much help in the sarch, and, therefore, it may be ye'd better stay where ye be. There be venison and bread; and there be matches; and there be a knife and a hatchet. Ye'll find a shanty in the swale back of the knoll, that I built six year ago. It may need patchin', but the work will be healthy for ye and keep yer thoughts goin' in right directions. The victuals will last ye nigh on to a week ef ye ain't wasteful, and I conceit that Henry will leave his pistol with ye; and ye'll find partridges thick in the woods back of the shanty. Ye needn't worry, for within a week one of us will come back to ye; and ef we be lucky, there will be three instead of one. And now, friend," continued the Trapper, as he rose and took him by the hand, "the Lord has been marciful to ye in yer trouble, and he will stay with ye when we go. Ye'll find the sound of the waters on the beach, and the sound of the winds in the trees, soothin' to yer mind; and Natur' will keep ye cheerful; for ef a man's heart be right she gives a man company that never distarbs him; and, ef he has wit and be teachable to larn her wisdom she will make him wiser than them that know nothin' but the larnin' of books. Come, Henry, we must be goin'. The sun is gittin' to the west, and the girl must not stay another night alone."

CHAPTER XX.

"HENRY!"

The word came out quick and sharp; and, as the Trapper spoke it, he slid from under the boat he was backing, and stood, as if fixed immovable to the spot, with eyes fastened on the ground. His companion, who was toiling under the pack basket but a little way in the rear, startled by the energy of the Trapper's exclamation, slipped from the knottings of the straps, and was by the Trapper's side like a flash; and so, for a moment, the two men stood, both bent forward in their eagerness, and with eyes gazing steadfastly downward.

"Yis, Henry, it is a track, and sech a track as no animil ever made. The wind has blowed a couple of leaves away where the heel ought to be; but the broken twig be left, and the markin's of the instep be plain. What say ye, boy, is it, or is it not, the foot of the girl?"

For a moment the young man made no reply; but while the Trapper was speaking his eye had ranged forward on the line of the trail, — or where the trail must have been if the indentation in the leaves had been made by the girl's passing, — and the result of the searching glance he had thrown ahead was certainly conclusive. For he laid a hand on the Trapper's

shoulder, and, with the other, pointed some fifty feet farther on, at a trunk of a huge beech that the winds, perhaps, twenty years before had prostrated.

"By the Lord, Henry!" exclaimed the Trapper, "that be a sign that can't lie. Yis, the girl sartinly sot down on that trunk; for the moss be distarbed, and ye can see the flake that peeled off when she dropped her weight on to it."

Before the Trapper had done speaking, both men were bending over the beech trunk studying with eyes trained to note the least disturbance of Nature, and hoping to find further indications that would make conclusive, not merely that the girl had passed that spot, but the direction she had taken when she left it, and the time that had elapsed since she passed.

"See here," said the Trapper, and he laid his hand on a small balsam, but little larger than his finger, that grew within reach of the fallen beech, "look at the root of this sapling, and tell me what ye see?"

"The earth is disturbed at the root, John Norton."

"Sartin, boy, sartin," answered the Trapper, "but look close. The sile is sartinly distarbed, as ye say, but don't ye see it be distarbed on the furder side most, and ef that doesn't show which way the girl took when she riz from this log, then there be no vartue in signs."

"How so?" asked the young man.

"Set down on the log," answered the Trapper, "and take hold of the saplin' yerself, and lift yerself by it,—leastwise, help yerself a leetle in the liftin'. Not that way, boy! not that way! The roots don't give as

they did to the pull of the girl, as ye lift that way; and that shows that she wasn't lookin' the way ye be when she pulled at the tree. That's it, that's it," added the Trapper, as the young man pulled himself up, facing slightly in another direction, "now the 'arth gives as it did when the girl had it in her hands. And she was weak, too, when she lifted herself from the moss; for she put her whole strength into the pull which helped her up, so that the root that runs out this way was pried from the 'arth as ye be pryin' it now. And when she started, she started off here; and her trail leads along the ridge that slopes down into the swale. Foller on, boy, foller on, and look for the heel of the track. When the trail leads up ye'll find the print of the toes, and when it leads down the heel bears the weight. Yis, boy, sarch for the heel. Ye'll sartinly find it beyend the ledge there, where the bank slopes steep."

True to the Trapper's prediction, the young man had no sooner circled the ledge, and come to the pitch of the hill, than there, sure enough, plainly to be seen, was the print of the girl's heel as her boot had sunk into the yielding mould.

"The girl was weak, boy," remarked the Trapper, as his eyes caught the trail, "yis, the girl was sartinly weak; for the steps be too fur apart for one of her size to make when walkin' in her strength; and they be oneven too. Ye see where she stopped, off and on; and see here," he added, "here be a branch that gave way as she steddied herself by it in passin'. And see,

boy, the gum that come out of the hole that was made when the bough gave way in her grasp is bright and clear, and barely stiff."

"How long is it since she passed here, John Norton?"

"Not later than the mornin', boy, not later than the mornin'. Yis, the girl was sartinly alive this mornin."

No one can imagine the feelings of the young man as he heard this declaration of the Trapper. To know that the object of their search had passed the spot on which he was standing, but a few short hours before; to know for a certainty that she was alive, and might be even then but a short distance away; to know that after all their wanderings they had come to the only place in all the woods where a trace of her presence could have been discovered, caused such feelings to possess him, as no one less interested than he, or one in his position, could have.

"Is it possible, John Norton, that we shall find her?"

"Sartinly," answered the Trapper, "leastwise, I see no reason agin it. I felt, when I got the direction from the man in the panther's skin on the P'int, that the girl would sartinly be in our boat afore night. And now I know that the thought will prove true. I wish the pups was here."

"What good would the dogs do us?" asked the young man.

"Lord, boy," answered the Trapper, "do ye think that Rover has consorted with me these twelve year and not larnt the signs of a trail or growed jedgmatical in sech matters? I can't answer for Sport, for

he's a leetle heady, and his nose is so good that he has not edicated his eye; but Rover be a dog of a hundred, and his nose and his eyes jine works. I've often conceited he's more'n half human. Lord, boy, I'm sartin that he knows a doe's track from a buck's arter the scent has been dead half a week; and many a time when I've been trailin' arter some vagabonds who had been thievin' on the line of my traps, has he taken the trail ahead of me, and I never was quite sartin whose eye was the quickest, hisn or mine. Yis, ef the old dog was here he'd know what we was arter afore we had come to this spot of the trail, and he'd take it up right here, and ye'd hear his bayin's by the girl's side ef she be livin', and over her body ef she be dead, in a good deal quicker time than ye and me can thread it out; but we don't need to foller it," —

"Don't need to follow it!" exclaimed the young man, "what have we come here for if not to follow it?"

"Easy, boy, easy," answered the Trapper. "The trail is here,— that's plain enough; and now the question is, where be the eend of it?"

"Where is the end of it?" asked the young man.

"The trail runs toward the lake," answered the old man; "and ye'll find the eend of it, and the girl at the eend of it on the beach."

"How do you know that, John Norton?" questioned Herbert somewhat incredulously.

"How do I know it?" answered the Trapper. "How do I know where to find a buck on a hot day

when his trail heads towards the water? The trail, I tell ye, runs toward the lake; and the reason is because toward the lake is down hill, and the way from the lake is up hill; and the girl was weak when she passed this p'int — so weak that she staggered in her walkin', — and whether she knowed what way she was goin' or not, she would keep on goin' down hill, because she couldn't go any other way. When she got to the bottom of the slope here, a mile to the east, she'd have come to the water. Yis, the girl be on the beach, — that is, ef she was strong enough to git to the beach; and ef she wasn't strong enough, we'll find the girl on the line of this trail as it runs down this ledge atween here and the beach. We'll strike for the lake. There be somethin' in me that tells me that on the beach of the lake we'll find the girl."

The reasoning of the old man seemed so conclusive; the judgment on which it was based, seemed so well supported by woodcraft and nature alike that the young man made no objection to the proposition; he simply said, —

"God grant it may be so," and followed the Trapper as he returned to the point at which they had struck the trail.

The Trapper again resumed his position under the boat, and the young man adjusted himself to the straps of the pack; and, with far different feelings than when they stopped, they resumed their course toward the lake, which the Trapper assured his companion was not a mile distant.

"Henry," said the Trapper, "the sarch be about over."

The two men were standing on the shore of the lake. The Trapper had launched the boat, and Henry had slipped the pack from his shoulders. Both were wiping away the perspiration, which their struggle through the underbrush had brought to their faces.

"I do not know why I should doubt your prediction, John Norton; but I cannot credit it."

"Hoot, boy, what be the matter with ye? I tell ye the girl be on this lake. We'll find her on the beach beyend the P'int there, waitin' for us to come. Ef not on the beach beyend the P'int, a leetle furder on. It may be as fur down as the shanty where I used to camp in my trappin's; but I sartinly doubt ef she has got so fur; — but here she be, ef there be any vartue in signs. Boy, what is it in yer face? Say yer say out."

"I will admit," answered the young man, "that the signs point as you say. That the girl passed the spot this morning where we found her trail, seems to me credible; yes, certain. And if she passed the spot this morning heading toward the lake, I agree with you that she ought to be on the shores of the lake this minute. But something in my heart tells me she is not there. You may laugh at me and call it foolish, but from my boyhood I have had at times impressions come to me touching persons and things, concerning the truth of which I could give at the time no explanation, but which, nevertheless, proved true in the end.

Whence these impressions come I cannot tell. How much I should allow them to influence me I have never yet decided. But in old time, I know, a higher intelligence maintained its connection with the intelligence of men. Nor was it inefficient to guide them. And I have often thought — I have been constrained to think that that connection: the divine connection with the human — had never been sundered, and that men in the emergencies of their lives, and previous to the point where great occurrences were to happen, were moved now as then by the Spirit of God. Call it what you please; think of it as you please, John Norton, but standing here on the beach of the lake, on whose shore you say the girl is, and on whose shore I admit, from the evidence of many signs, the girl ought to be, I have within me a feeling which contradicts your saying, and which denies the conclusion of the evidences that we have seen. John Norton, the girl is not on this lake."

For several moments the Trapper made no reply but stood leaning on the staff of his paddle, looking steadily off over the water. At last, turning to his companion, he said, —

"I know what ye mean, boy, for I have felt the same feelin', and I have had the same thoughts. I have met men among the redskins that were great medicine men, and some of them was gifted in the line ye speak of. I have camped with them on the trail, and I've sot with them in council, and I've heerd them say jest the opposite of what the chiefs said, and

which the wisdom of human larnin' and of them that was skilled in the ways of the woods thought must be true. And I've noted that arter the thing had happened the chiefs was wrong, and the medicine man was right. No, boy, I've lived too many years and obsarved too much, to laugh at ye for anything ye might say in yer honesty. And it may be yer sperit is right in what ye say, but sartin it is that we be here, and the sun be an hour yit from its settin'; and sartin it is that afore it sets we will know whether yer sperit or the signs be right. I trust ye be wrong; yis, boy, I sartinly trust ye be wrong, for I've sot my heart on findin' the girl, and I know the girl ought to be on this lake, and ef she ain't on this lake —"

Here the Trapper paused a moment, and then added, — "Put yer pack in the boat, boy; yer feelin's may be right, but our duty is to sarch. If the Lord himself should say that the girl wasn't here, I should sartinly scout round the shores a leetle more afore I left it. The Lord has his duty, and we have ourn, and our duty is to sarch, and the sun be nigh to its setting."

And, so saying, the Trapper pushed the boat from the shore, adding, —

"It's jest as well, Henry, for a man to look a leetle into things himself, even ef the Lord has fixed 'em."

A quiet stretch of water — no ripple on it; and the boat, as urged by the Trapper's paddle, glided through it as if it were oil. Herbert had not lifted the oars; their pressure was not needed. It was the moment when eye and ear, and not the strength of

muscle, would solve the problem. The boat glided on. A little stretch of beach lay on the other shore. How brightly it shone in the sun! The Trapper steered straight toward it. And, as the boat moved slowly past it, but a rod or two away, both men scanned it with eyes that noted every pebble. But the yellow sand lay smooth and undisturbed, save where a deer had marked it with his hoof as he came down to drink. The boat kept its course and glided forward. It drew on to the narrows, and ran along the beach that made the western line of the outreaching point. No markings there. An otter had flattened the sands as he crawled out of the water, and a few rods farther on flattened them as he slid down, but beyond this no sign that life had printed its motion on them.

The boat reached the very point. The Trapper's face showed no sign, and his paddle kept the steadiness of its easy motion. The young man sat facing forward, his face slightly sharpened, and, perhaps, a trifle of the color gone from the bronzed cheek. From habit, his rifle rested on his knee. He had not thought of it, probably in his excitement, which it took no little strength to conceal. The boat glided round the point, and the main body of its water for a mile stretched away. The Trapper headed toward the beach that edged the northern shore with a stroke as steady and true as if he felt no interest in the revelation that lay so short a distance ahead. Slowly the boat drew in toward the beach, and while yet forty rods away the Trapper said, quietly, —

"Ye can see her tracks on the beach, boy, abreast of the balsam with the broken top."

The words were quietly spoken — very quietly.

"I see them," answered his companion, and he spoke as quietly as the Trapper had spoken.

"There be tracks in here to the left," added the Trapper, in a moment more.

"I see them," answered the young man, laconically.

And so the boat drew in towards the beach, — drew slowly but steadily in.

And the two men who had been so faithful in their search, and who had now come to the culmination of it, as the one felt and the other hoped, spoke as quietly each to the other as if within their hearts there burnt no glow, and in their minds was only the movement of an ordinary experience.

"The girl is not in sight, for sartin," said the Trapper.

"No, the girl is not in sight," answered Herbert.

"We will draw in here," said the Trapper, after a moment; "we will draw in here and see what the beach will tell us."

"I think we had better," answered his companion.

And so the boat came to the shore. The two men without a word stepped out upon the sands. The beach was thick with tracks — tracks of a human foot: of a woman's foot; tracks of feet that had come and gone; of feet that had walked up and down; now straight, now crookedly.

"Look here," said the Trapper, and he pointed to an

indentation in the sand made by a heavy animal, "what is that, boy?"

"A panther," answered his companion, and he spoke as if his mind took no notice of his speech. Men at times, in great excitement, speak so.

"Yis," answered the Trapper, "the track is the track of a panther, but the step is the step of a man. This be the track of the man we left on the P'int, and here is where he seed the girl."

"Where is the girl?" asked Herbert, and he turned his face quick as a flash toward the Trapper.

"We'll see," answered the Trapper; "this way, boy, this way. The beach be writ like a book. We shall find it all here somewhere."

He had not gone a dozen rods before he touched his companion on the shoulder, and pointed a little in advance.

A deep indentation in the sand. Two indentations. The two men approached them. The Trapper stopped and leaned on his paddle. The sun shone brightly on his whitened locks. The young man lifted his hat from his head, and the two stood looking, as two men might look at an altar where their mother prayed, after death had claimed her.

"The girl knelt here, Henry," and his voice thickened, "the girl knelt here."

"Where was God?" asked the young man sharply.

"Not fur away, boy, not fur away. The Lord be nigh them that kneel," said the Trapper reverently. And then he added, as he entered the boat, "Come

aboard, Henry, come aboard; the sun be gone, and the darkness be comin'; but ears will sarve us when the eye fails. I tell ye the girl is on this lake, and she be livin' too, and ef she moves a foot or makes a sound above her breath afore the mornin' our ears will hear it." And the old man pushed the boat gently from the shore, and slowly drew along the beach, noting in the gathering darkness the failing signs of the wanderer's trail.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was afternoon. The sun was sinking with that slow and easy motion with which in the long summer days it glides downward to its cool evening rest. The least hint of shadow lurked under the cedar branches at the western extremity, and hung like an intangible vapor of darkness around the tips of the balsam branches. But above, the sky was bright with the day's brightness. The surface of the lake gleamed an answering response of color, and the western sides of the pines glinted back, through all their glistening stems, the gleaming beams which, in losing something of their heat, had gained, or seemed to gain, a higher reflective power.

Half way down the lake, on one of the little beaches, her figure brought sharply out against the dark, black background of the balsams, as the sun shone upon it, stood a girl. Her hands, lightly joined, hung drooping in front of her, and her face was lifted upward to the sun. Thus she stood, her eyes gazing at the sun, as if she would take within their large, clear orbs a light to last her through the coming gloom. Her hair, unconfined, flowed over her shoulders. The sunlight shone on it, and penetrated it until the light-brown color took of its warmth. The single hairs lying freest, bright as the beam itself; the depth of the waving mass grew tawny with a hint of richest yellow, like Etruscan gold.

She was tall. She stood erect; her pose firm; no weakness in it; no awkward stiffness, either. Like a delicate shaft, slender indeed, but firm of material, and set on an adequate pedestal. The face was tranquil; not with the tranquillity of contentment, but of patience and of power, — the tranquillity of one who has much to bear, but is able to bear it. If it were possible to associate so common a feeling with such an uncommon face, one would have been tempted to say that the girl had suffered and was suffering from hunger; for the pallor and the first symptoms of emaciation, whose suggestive and pathetic shrinking precedes the actual loss of flesh, were plainly visible around the sockets of the eyes, on the curvature of the cheek, and the drawn tightness of the large and naturally ripe mouth. But still it would have taken but a glance to have caused any of our readers to recognize that the girl standing thus on the beach of the lonely lake, and the girl whose picture the detective had shown Herbert and the Trapper, were one and the same.

Slowly the sun went down; slowly but surely. Could it not stay? Could God not cause it to halt, that a young child of his, thus deserted of all but the light of the blessed day, might, at least, die cheered by the sweetness of that light? So her eyes prayed as she stood with them fastened on the descending orb. For five nights had she known the horror of darkness: the horror of its sounds and its stillness alike. Five times had the sun gone down, and left her standing upon that beach alone. Five times had Night, — the

wild, roving, screaming Night of the woods, filled with animals and not men; filled with beasts and birds of prey, and wild things that creep and crawl, flutter and fly aimlessly, — captured her body on that shore, and tortured it with shrinkings, and the horror of uncertainty. And now, for the sixth time, the same dreadful Night was coming on, — coming like a thief, like a murderer, adjusting his mask as he moves on his errand, darkening his face as he creeps toward the performance of his awful deed. Once had she stayed the night long on that beach: stayed that she might see the stars, and have the companionship of orbs, whose beams shone, at least, on human habitations, and to whose shining human eyes somewhere, at least, were lifted. One night had she remained there, that she might have the companionship of the stars, — the evidence of life, of mercy, and protection.

Amid the gloom of that darkness which had murdered day, and cruelly surrounded her with danger from which she could not flee, and against which she had no protection, save of that eccentric Providence which allows one sweet innocent creature to be killed, and snatches another sweet and innocent creature from her doom! But even on that beach what terrors had come to her, and how powerless were the stars to help! In the sand, hidden from sight, she had heard things creep and crawl. On the edge of the bank her ears had caught the stealing footfall. From the declivity of the overhanging hill whose slope rose sharply from the shore, she had heard animals come down, — wild

creatures that called unto each other, challenged each other with fierce screams, and, when they met, joined in dreadful combat, until the very woods startled out of slumber, screamed back to them, multiplying the wild outcries. Other footfalls, too, her ears had caught: footfalls that had no voice accompanying them; footfalls that moved slowly and cautiously, and were interrupted by long watchful pauses; footfalls from feet that would advance and halt, and then come on again; come directly toward her; come till they reached the very border of the open space; and she, driven to the water's edge, and breathless, the blood freezing in her veins, would know that in the darkness wild, hidden eyes — eyes she could not see — were looking out at her.

What help were stars? — stars that were far off? — stars without moods or sympathies, that she felt and knew would shine and twinkle as brightly and as mercilessly, too, above her dying, above her dead, as they were shining upon her living.

Five nights of terror. Five days and nights of fasting. No wonder the cheeks showed signs of shrinking. No wonder that in the corners of the mouth and round the edges of the lips a tightening and a pallor began to show. No wonder that the eyes of the girl were lifted toward the sun, as men in dreadful stress of death lift eyes to heaven, praying, through their dumb piteousness, for mercy. And yet the pose of the body, as it stood upon the beach, showed courage. The light form lifted itself erect, as if braced with the might of

inner strength; and even in the dark depths of her eyes, turned as they were longingly and entreatingly toward the sun, a light of finest courage shone out, as if within her were two natures: one weak enough to need companionship, the other strong enough to stand up and die alone.

At last, the sun went down behind the mountains, and the long, narrow lake lay in deep shadow. Gloom captured the shores. It crept out from under the branches of the balsams and from amid the dark pines. It stole duskily across the bright sands of the beach, and there, pausing a moment, began to flow out upon the water itself. Little by little the air continued to thicken. Dusk deepened in it. The sky above lost its bright blue tint, and the great vault grew gloomy. The whole world darkened. Nature seemed stricken with grief, — a grief she would fain hide, and so adjusted to her fair proportions, the drapery of darkness, and over her bright face let fall the gloomy veil. And when night had fully come, when the lake and the woods were one, because the darkness which obliterates all distinction was spread densely over all, upon the beach, amid the gloom, the girl still stood alone. The sixth day had passed, and the sixth night had come.

What should she do? Should she sit still, and wait the dark hours through, waiting the danger that each hour might bring? No: she could not sit and wait for the morning to dawn. What morning? Would any morning ever come to her again, unless it were the morning whose light shines without lessening and

without shade, on the green slopes of the everlasting hills? No; she could not sit; she must walk; she must move; she must, by physical action, keep her mind from brooding terror. Did her heart sink? Perhaps. Did she feel that the gloom was death, left deserted as she was? Doubtless. But she fought it nobly. She took the peril out of peril by the bravery of her facing it. She counselled with her intelligence. She did the best she could to banish her womanly timidity by wise philosophy. There were chances, she said to herself — chances of discovery. Some boat might pass, some hunter might be threading through the woods. Her enemies might relent, retrace their steps, and free her from her dreadful peril. Or God, by some signal providence, might yet intervene in her behalf. So she fought her fear most sturdily.

She rallied her courage to face the emergency without shrinking; for she said within her soul, "If death itself shall come, it would come at some time, and what matters the place, and what matters the time? Could a multitude make death anything but a solitude? Do we not all have to die alone, though twenty hands of love be within reach, and twenty faces love-lighted make their solemn circle round us when our eyes grow dim?" So she reasoned with herself, both foolishly and wisely, seeking by things true and half-true, alike, comfort in her misery, and strength in her weakness.

She rose. She walked the sands. She walked slowly, for her step was growing feeble. Her prolonged fasting had begun to tell upon her frame: and

the splendid strength of her young form was insensibly leaving the limbs it had braced so well. She paused, here and there, as she walked, felt in the darkness for the cedar-stems, plucked them, put the fragrant fragments in her mouth, and toyed with the pungent taste with her tongue.

This she did, seeking to occupy her mind, — seeking to relieve the dreadful monotony of the silence and the darkness. But she was weak — weak from hunger — weak from lack of food. She had not felt it until now. Her health was perfect; her temper brave. Her native strength had fought the incoming weakness — fought it successfully for days; but at last the enemy had conquered. The revelation of her weakness, coming to her in the darkness of the night, shocked her. It startled her with a new terror; and her young mind recognized, as she steadied herself on the sands amid the gloom, the dreadful significance of the revelation. And as she felt the failing of her mortal strength, her soul went up and out toward Him whose strength braces the world, and unto whom all weakness, in its trembling and its terror, perforce must cry.

She knelt upon the sands, and, lifting her eyes into the darkness, prayed.

"O Thou that dwellest in light, who seeth through all darkness and noteth the dangers that lurk therein, who maketh and keepeth the weak things of the earth in life, from amid this awful gloom I pray thee. O Father, hear now my prayer. Thy child I am, and sore my need. The terror that walketh by night is on

me, and I know not where to fly. I shrink from what I cannot see. Deliver me from this lonely spot, and the lonely death that is fast coming to me. Be thou Almighty Father this night, and with a Father's love send help quickly, or I perish."

She stopped, rose quickly from her knees, and stood erect, her hands pressed tightly above her heart, expectant; for, from out the darkness a sound had come, a sound made by no stealing beast or dreadful creeping thing, — the sound of a paddle dipping the water softly, and of a boat moving with gentle rippling onward through the gloom, moving directly toward her.

The next instant the boat touched the sand, — touched the sand almost at her very feet, — and the Trapper's voice from out the darkness hailed, —

"I heerd a voice nigh to this spot, praying for aid. Girl, where be ye, for Henry and me be here?" And then a light flashed through the gloom, and Herbert and the Trapper, standing in their boat, saw the girl they had sought for so long, lying prone upon the sand.

"Our sarch be over, Henry," said the Trapper, as he stepped from the boat. And lifting the girl in his strong arms, he added, "Bring the blankets from the boat, boy, and start a fire at the edge of the beach here by the big pine, for the girl be nigh starved as I conceit, and has fainted in her weakness from very joy; but joy never kills, as I have

noted, and she will come to herself pretty soon, beyend doubt; and when she's tasted a leetle food, and drank a cup of warmin' drink, she will be strong enough to tell us many things, and we sartinly have many things to tell her."

THE STORY OF THE MAN WHO MISSED IT.

THE STORY OF THE MAN WHO MISSED IT.

CHAPTER I.

THANKSGIVING DAY had come and gone, and the old Trapper had retired after the festivities of it to his couch, and had yielded himself to slumber. His sleep was of the kind to be expected in one of his age and habits: sufficiently profound to satisfy the wants of nature, but by no means so heavy as not to yield back the sleeper to wakefulness at the coming within range of the senses of any sound or sight that was unusual. For some two hours the Trapper had been sleeping, and the great white moon, shining at its full, stood nearly at that point in the zenith which marked the midnight hour, when the two hounds, who were lying on the great hearthstone in front of the logs still in full blaze and glow, lifted their heads with a common movement, and gave voice to a low, interrogative growl.

"What is it, pups?" said the old Trapper with a quickness of utterance that might have led one not acquainted with his habits to imagine that he had not even been asleep; "what is it, pups?" and he rose to a sitting posture in his bed, with his eyes on the dogs and his senses fully alert.

The hounds, as if feeling they had done their duty, made no further manifestation, and again rested their muzzles on their extended paws, but with eyes that still remained fastened upon the door

The old man slid from the bed and into his clothes with a hunter's celerity. But even while doing it, his ear caught the lightest possible sound of approaching footsteps.

It was evident from the looks of the Trapper that he was surprised. The steps approaching were without doubt those of a man. Had they been those of an animal, they would have caused no astonishment, for animals of the larger sort, especially when compelled by hunger, were not infrequent visitors to the little clearing in which his cabin stood; but to hear a man coming towards his door at the dead of night, when he supposed there was not a human being within fifty miles, was extraordinary enough to quicken his attention and strike him with surprise.

But whoever the man was that was approaching, he was evidently in no hurry. Occasionally he stopped, and after a moment's pause would come on again. His steps were not only slow, but the sound they made was the sound of a step taken in weakness or excessive weariness.

Wondering whom his midnight visitor could be, the old man seated himself on the edge of the bed and waited his coming. The dogs still lay on the hearth, with their muzzles on their paws, and their eyes fastened on the door.

The steps approached the threshold and stopped. For a moment no farther sound was heard. Then a knock sounded upon the door. It was a weak, timid knock; not the strong, hearty, friendly knock that a hunter delivers on a comrade's door; but a faltering, half mistrustful tap, as if the one who gave it had hesitated before giving it, and was by no means sure that he had a right to give it at all.

The old Trapper still remained seated on the edge of the bed, and before the faint sound of the feeble tap had scarcely sounded, said in his usual strong and hearty tone of voice, —

"Come in!"

For a moment no response followed the invitation, then a hand was heard feebly fumbling with the latch, which finally it grasped, and the door slowly opened, — opened as if the man was still in doubt either as to the propriety of his own conduct, or the reception with which he would meet. Thus slowly the door opened, and a man stepped into the room; a dog followed the man; the door closed, and the man and the dog stood in the firelight fully revealed.

The hounds made no movement, and the Trapper stirred not an inch. Thus for a full minute the Trapper and the hounds looked at the man and the dog; and the man and the dog looked at the Trapper and the hounds. And it is doubtful if ever before there stood in a hunter's cabin so singular a looking man or so remarkable a looking dog.

The Trapper looked the man over from head to foot,

and with equal curiosity studied the dog, each remarkable in his way. And as the reader is destined to learn of the peculiarities of both, it may perhaps be well that we describe the two singular visitors to his cabin whom the Trapper thus unexpectedly saw standing before him.

The man was tall — remarkably tall. He was spare — unusually spare. As he entered he had lifted a light cloth cap from his head, and his countenance was fully revealed. His hair was black as black could be, not over-plenty in thickness, but long enough to reach straggglingly to his shoulders. Amid its blackness some gray was mingled. His forehead was high — unusually high — and very prominent, especially in its upper half. His eyebrows were abundant even to shagginess, — strong brows of coarsish hair. There was gray in them, too. His eyes were large, very black, very mild — a mildness that bordered on plaintiveness; but through their dimness there shone the suggestion of a gleam and glow as if their mildness might be set on fire from some latent but unsmothered flame. His ears were large, set prominently out from the head, thin, sensitively edged. Between them and the eyes, on either side, was a recess beneath which the cheekbones projected sharply. The nose was large, but thin and finely curved at the nostril's edge.

So far the face, if not strong, was remarkably intellectual, — a face that denoted ability; a face that argued mental quickness, finest imagination, and the power to idealize the common so that it would seem

extraordinary, — to create another world if the present one should not suffice. But the mouth was weak. It was small in size; too small compared with the noble countenance above it; the lips were curved, and in spite of years smooth and rounded like a boy's, — a mouth of remarkably infantile appearance considering the age of its owner. The chin beneath did not retreat, nor was it prominent enough for power. The curvature of the cheek, as outlined by the jaws, was not full enough to express determination and manly vigor.

His head sat on a neck that was long and small. Exposure — for it was without cover — had wrinkled it and made its skin coarse. His shoulders were thin and stooping, — such as students of unusual height acquire. His clothing was remarkable; first, because there was so little of it; and secondly, because it was of so thin a fabric. His coat was evidently unpadded, of cheap material, and buttoned closely around him even to his neck. It fitted him too closely to allow one to believe that his waistcoat was either of very thick or very warm material. His pantaloons could not be called stout, and were chiefly remarkable for their decorations. They were of composite material, and suggested Joseph's coat, without its splendor. The old Trapper's quick eye noted several pieces of buckskin that had been stitched into the original fabric in different places, and several other pieces of light cloth that bore a suspicious resemblance to those little bags that dealers in family provisions are acquainted

with. His shoes were large in size but low in build, and one of them at the toes resembled a doorway sufficiently open for easy exit.

On the man's back was a pack, or what might have been a pack, if the contents had been sufficiently bulky to extend it. As it was, there was a look of leanness about it which suggested that its owner was either not troubled with earthly possessions, or else was too modest to display them. In his hands the man held a rifle of flint-lock pattern, very long in the barrel, and of an appearance which suggested antiquity. A little leather pouch and a small powder-horn with a wooden stopple completed his outfit.

Such was the man in outward appearance as he stood within the doorway, with the firelight shining upon him, while the Trapper with steady and curious gaze looked him over.

The dog was as remarkable in appearance as his master. He was of medium size, of the Irish breed, in part, and showed unmistakable evidence of high blood, but blood by no means free of extraordinary outcrossing: for while his ears were long and thin, as an Irish hound's should be, his body was clothed with the coarse, stiff hair of the terrier kind. To say that he was thin in flesh would not be a characterization; he was extraordinarily thin. He was not only thin, but he seemed conscious of his thinness. He did not stand erect, but in a kind of doubled-up and shrinking posture, as if he felt that his natural length was out of proportion with his thickness, and he could in some way improve his

appearance by concentration. Yet he was by no means devoid of intelligence, for his eyes were bright, his muzzle lean, and his frontal prominent. He struck one as a dog naturally of uncommon parts, but who had experienced such a series of canine disappointments that he had lost confidence in himself. A more extraordinary looking man or a more remarkable looking dog was certainly never seen. The Trapper rose from the bed on which he had been sitting, and, as if he had rightly divined the condition of his strange visitors, said, —

"Stranger, what can I do for ye?"

The man looked at him with his large black eyes and replied, in a mild, deferential voice, —

"Are you John Norton?"

"Sartin. Yis, I be John Norton; and ef there's anything John Norton can do for ye, jest state it."

"I was taking a little walk through the woods — it's a very pleasant night; I don't know as I ever saw a pleasanter night — I and my dog were taking a little stroll through the woods — we are given a good deal to strolling — and as I was standing on the bank out yonder admiring the beauties of Nature, I happened to see your cabin, and, feeling in rather a companionable mood, I thought I would see if you were up. I feared I should interrupt you. I hope I haven't interrupted you. Have I?"

"Interrupted me? Lord, no! I was sittin' here with the hounds wishin' somebody would come along, and yer jest as welcome as ef ye'd been expected for a month."

The white angel that took into heaven the old man's sentence — which, from an ethical point of view, was not exactly truthful — attributed beyond doubt the slight inaccuracy of the remark to the motive which prompted and forgave it. For the old Trapper was not slow to discern that if the stranger for whose coming he had placed the plate on his bountiful board that day had come late, he had come at last, and that God had sent a hungry man to his door. And so he added, his whole heart moving out toward the stranger, who, as he stood before him, presented the strongest possible appeal to his sympathies, —

"Stranger, set yer rifle there in the corner and move up in front of the fire. Here, pups, make room, and let yer shivering companion have a chance to warm himself." And the old man shoved the great arm-chair in front of the blazing logs, and actually took the gun from the stranger's hand and placed it against the wall, while the man moved forward and quietly seated himself in the offered chair.

The old man busied himself for a moment in making additions to the fire, and stirring the glowing coals, while the stranger stretched out his thin hands and warmed them by the genial blaze.

"Don't ye want something to eat?" asked the Trapper.

The man continued to warm his hands for an instant before making reply, and then he said, —

"I am not particularly hungry. I am not much of an eater. I don't want to trouble you. I see you

have cleared away the dishes, but if you happen to have some cold victuals left from your Thanksgiving dinner, — I believe this is Thanksgiving, — is it not?" —

"Sartin," said the Trapper; "sartin, this be Thanksgivin', and me and the pups had a great feast, and I had a plate set for ye all day."

"How?" asked the man.

"I had a plate, I say," returned the Trapper, "set for ye all day."

"Indeed! I am sorry I missed it. I have missed many things in my life; — it is not unusual for me to miss things; but I always get them in the end. I *always get them in the end*," repeated the man, with a rising inflection of the voice. "You don't think it's anything very bad, do you," — addressing the Trapper earnestly, — "for a man to miss things if he gets them in the end?"

"Well, stranger," returned the Trapper, "I don't know about gittin' things at the eend. It sartinly strikes me that it's a good deal better to git 'em by the middle. This gittin' things by the eend don't sarve a man's parpose, as I conceit."

"Oh, I don't know," said the man dreamily. "It don't make much difference when we get what we want if we only get it in the end. But I am sorry, — if you had a plate set for me and you had food enough. Did you have food enough?" and the man put the question plaintively, with a tinge of incredulity in his voice, as if the habit of want had made him incredu-

lous as to plenty. "Are you sure you had food enough?"

"Food enough!" exclaimed the Trapper. "Heavens and arth! do ye suppose me and the pups come to Thanksgivin' without food enough? Ye jest set there a minit while I fetch ye out yer supper." And the old man busied himself in bringing the table to the centre of the floor, and filling it with the ample abundance left uneaten at the conclusion of the meal.

When the man had moved forward to seat himself in the chair, his dog moved forward too. At first he had seated himself in a half-crouching posture, a little in the rear of the chair, as if, however sure his master might be of the cordiality of the reception, he himself was not certain of his welcome. But gradually, a little at a time, he had moved himself forward until he had actually placed himself in advance of his master, and was now sitting on the hearthstone scarcely a foot from the ashes, and even then it was noticeable that he shivered. He was evidently a dog of a great deal of character and perfectly self-possessed. Few dogs could have been thus placed within such close proximity to two of his kind that were strangers to him without either showing signs of fear, or making some canine advances to his companions. But this dog showed, on the one hand, no sign of timidity, and, on the other, no consciousness that another of his species was in the room. For he did not even turn his eyes in the direction of the hounds, nor in the direction of the Trapper, who was bearing the savory dishes im-

mediately past him to the table. And when the latter placed a large platter of venison on the hearth in order to warm it within a few inches of his body, so that the odor of the meat must have entered his nostrils, he never by the least movement showed consciousness of its proximity, but continued to gaze with sober attention into the fire, as if his poor frame found full satisfaction in the ministry which the genial warmth was rendering to his system. Once, indeed, he did turn his eyes up to the face of his master, with a look absolutely human in their expression of gladness and gratitude. He even moved his forward parts so that by stretching his neck he could touch his master's hands that were extended toward the warmth. He moved his muzzle gently against one of the palms, and lapped it with his tongue, and then quietly resumed his former position, and again gazed steadily into the fire.

The Trapper was not slow to mark the action of the dog, nor sense the propriety of his conduct.

"That's a knowin' dog, ef he be a leetle thin," said he to the stranger. "Ye've consorted together some time, I reckon."

"Yes," replied his master, "he has been my companion twelve years."

"It's a goodly time," resumed the Trapper, as he busied himself with the preparations, "and a man who has feasted and fasted with a dog twelve year naterally grows to love him."

"We have not feasted much," said the man; "we have never had much luck. We have fasted a good

deal, and fasting makes better friends than feasting in this world. But we shall surely have our feast by and by. I have told him many times we should have our feasting by and by."

"I trust ye may," answered the Trapper; "ye shall sartinly have a taste of it to-night, both ye and yer dog; for the vittals be plenty, and the cookin' is as good as a man who has cooked his own food for seventy year can make it."

"Lucky," said the man, — speaking to his dog, through whose frame there still ran an occasional shiver, — "Lucky, our host says we shall feast to-night."

A human being could not have understood the language more plainly: at least, a human being could not have responded with a more positive manifestation of intelligence. For the dog turned his face with a quick motion toward his master, his ears pricked, his eyes fairly danced, his tail swept joyfully from right to left, and, turning deliberately around with his back to the fire, he fixed his eyes upon the table with an unmistakable expression of eagerness.

"Come, stranger," said the Trapper, "kick off yer shoes and strip off yer stockin's and pull on these warm socks;" and the old man tossed a pair, knit of coarsest yarn, onto the hearthstone; "and then move up to the table and fill yerself and yer dog, who is mighty nigh starvation, as I jedge. Ye'll both feel better arter yer full, for it's a cold night, and I conceit yer tramp has been a long un."

The man did as he was bidden. He untied his shoes and removed them from his feet. His stockings were not of the warmest nor free of holes, and when he had pulled the thick, warm socks onto his feet, he rose and moved to the table with a look of contentment and happy expectation that seemed to lift twenty years from his record.

The amount of food on the table seemed to astonish him. For a moment he held his knife and fork idly in his hands, while his gaze ranged over the bountiful board as if he was in doubt from which dish to help himself first, while his eyes had the peculiar eager look of one who was so hungry that he could not suppress the evidences of satisfaction which the presence of food had brought to his face.

"Ye seem a leetle in doubt," said the Trapper, "which of the meats to try fust. And I conceit the reason of yer feelin,' for more'n once have I fasted myself when a young man, in the old wars, and I was out skirmishing on the trail of the inemy, when the sound of yer gun would bring a hundred of the vagabonds onto ye in a minit. Yis, I've fasted in the midst of plenty, and I've knowed what it is to come to a feast suddenly when the stomach was empty and the cravin' of natur' unnaterally strong in me. My advice to ye is that ye try the vension haunch, for it's the only meat that a man can fairly fill himself with and not feel sort of oneasy arterwards. Yis, try the venison, stranger, for the buck was a good un, and ye'll find the juices will foller yer knife."

The man waited no longer. He cut a slice of the venison of a size that showed that his necessities were great or his determination high. The Trapper's eyes fairly danced as he saw him land the piece on his plate. Yet hungry as the man was, he fed himself with entire propriety. But his knife and fork were nevertheless quick in their movements, and it was evident that the keen sense of his hunger had made him for a time oblivious of his surroundings; for he spoke not a word to his host, and his countenance never lost the look of determined eagerness. He had certainly more than half finished the huge piece of venison with which he had helped himself, when he paused, and, turning to his dog, who stood at his side looking up into his face, he said,—

"Lucky, will you forgive me?"

The words were spoken as they might have been to a human companion whom inadvertently he had slighted, or of whose presence he had become unmindful when he should have been specially mindful of it. The tone could not have been more apologetic had the words been addressed to a man and not to a dog, nor could they have been received more intelligently than the dog received them. He wagged his tail good-naturedly, while his eyes gave his master a look of affection that no one could fail to understand. The man cut the remaining part of the piece into sections, and gave each mouthful to the dog. The dog ate with the same eagerness as his master, and, we may say, with the same propriety, for he stood steadfastly in his posi-

tion, made no indecorous movement of haste, but received the morsels from his master's hand with such thankfulness as only a dog when hungry can show to the master who feeds him.

We need not say that the Trapper had been no careless spectator of the spectacle presented by the man and the dog. Nor was he untouched by the evidence of affection existing between the two. But profound as was his pity for his strange and nearly starved guest, the sense of humor in him was too strong not to be stirred.

"I sartinly think, stranger," said he, "that we'd better jine works, for I conceit I can help ye out a leetle. Yer dog sartinly looks empty, and it'll take a good deal of meat to fill him. I don't conceit he's been very familiar with vittals lately, but I can see he has the true idee of eatin'; so if ye'll jest send him this side of the table, I'll feed him while ye feed yerself. There can be a good deal of weight added to yer dog by reasonable management afore ye be ready to move back from the table."

"I thank you," said the man, as he helped himself to another bountiful supply, "but Lucky and I always eat together, when we have anything to eat, and I doubt if he would take food from a stranger. I always divide my food with him. Don't you think that a man should always divide his food with his dog, John Norton?"

"Yis," said the Trapper, somewhat hesitatingly, "as a rule, I sartinly think yer be right; but ef the master be

hungry, and the dog is a good-sized un, and actally empty, and vittals be scarce, I can't say, — no, I sartinly can't say, that the man should divide with the dog at the beginnin' of the eatin'. A leetle later on perhaps he should divide, — a leetle later on, as I conceit."

The man was evidently not devoid of humor himself. For the first time since he entered the cabin, and for the first time for many days perhaps, a pleased expression came into his face. The suggestion of a smile played round his lips, and he looked good-naturedly into the face of the old man sitting opposite, whose countenance showed through its lines that semi-witty expression which never seems so witty as when it beams from the face of the aged. But he evidently did not assent to the opinion of the Trapper, for, as the eating progressed, at every mouthful with which he fed himself he gave an equal portion to his canine companion.

It is doubtful if ever a feast was more heartily eaten or enjoyed. Of food there was enough, and the man ate his fill, — not only ate himself, but gave to his dog, till it was evident that the hunger of both was appeased. At last he shoved his chair back from the table, and, with a happy expression on his face, he said, —

"Lucky, we've had a feast to-night. I told you it would come by and by. We must never be discouraged again, Lucky, — no, we will never be discouraged again, will we?"

The dog fairly shook himself in his delighted indorsement of his master's affirmation. He actually frisked

his assent, and opened his mouth as if he would give voluble expression to the pledge demanded of him. The Trapper laughed, — laughed as a host will when he sees the happiness of his guests, to whom, with his own hands, from his own store, in the benevolence of his heart, he has ministered. And he said, from the impulse of his good-nature, —

"Stranger, is there anything else I can do for ye?"

"John Norton," said the man, "I came to your door a stranger, and you took me in; I was a-hungered, and you gave me meat; I was cold and weary, and you warmed and rested me; I was unhappy, and you made me glad. I and my dog thank you for your goodness. And may the Lord bless you for what you have done for one of the least of his children."

The man said this gravely, tenderly, gratefully. And as he said it, with a motion as natural as true courtesy and gratitude could make it, he laid a hand on his heart and bowed to the Trapper.

The Trapper was visibly affected by the acknowledgment of his guest. His face, in its sobered sweetness, acknowledged the sentiment of the stranger, and returned it with equally unconscious courtesy.

"Ye are not the fust man," he replied, "that has come to my camp empty; for more'n once have I shared my leetle with the stranger, and more'n once has the stranger shared his leetle with me. There's a good deal of honest givin' and takin' in the world; leastwise, there's a good deal in the woods when the fortunit and the unfortunit meet. And Henry says

that the same is true in the settlements, and I sartinly conceit that the Lord has knowledge of the honest givin' and takin' between his creeturs that have, and his creeturs that haven't, whether it be done in the woods or in the clearin's."

As the old man mentioned the word settlement, a look of pain came to the face of his guest, as if the mention of cities had quickened unpleasant recollections. When the Trapper had concluded he replied, —

"I know not whom you call by the name of Henry, nor would I dispute his word, but my experience of cities and of the men that live in them has not been of a character to impress me with either their generosity or their justice. I have found men eager to get and to keep, but I have not found them eager to give, John Norton; nor have I found them honest in their getting or their keeping. I have found them ready to cheat; I have found them ready to lie; I have found them ready to kill!" And the man straightened his form to its erectest posture, and looked the Trapper steadily in the eye.

"I don't doubt," returned the Trapper, "that there be vagabonds in the settlements as well as in the woods, for more'n once have they played their pranks on me. More'n once have they fingered my traps and stolen the fur that an honest man's labor had earned; but I've left my marks on most of the rogues, and the few that have managed to dodge my lead will git fetched up in the Jedgment, ef the Lord keeps watch of the villany

in the woods, and I dare say he does, of the woods and the settlements both."

"Perhaps he does," said the stranger; "but his Judgment is a great way off, and the wronged find it hard to wait."

"I've often thought of that," said the Trapper; "I've often thought of that, and I've helped Him out a good deal off and on. I was comin' in from my traps this fall, and I caught a dirty thief rumagin' among my pots and kittles, and he had e'enamost everything I had in my cabin here done up in a bundle, and as I opened the door he was actally tryin' to git it on to his back."

"What did you do to him, John Norton?" asked the man eagerly, as if he was even more interested in the principle involved than in the narration of the facts.

"I held a council with him," said the Trapper, "and I did most of the talkin', and I mixed a good deal of arnest actin' with the talkin'; and between the actin' and the talkin', I sartinly conceit I made the p'ints clear to him. I doubt if the Lord will have much to do with this case, for I was a good deal riled, and I settled with the vagabond for time and etarnity both. The fact is," said the Trapper, and he leaned forward toward his guest, and placed his brawny hand on the table, "I conceit that the Jedgment is a good deal split up, and gin out by piecemeal, and that the Lord's idee is that when an honest hunter finds a vagabond in his cabin, rumagin' his stores, that the Jedgment Day has

come then and there. How does it strike ye, stranger?"

"The Great Book says, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.'"

"Sartinly, sartinly, that's right; that is, it's right from his p'int of lookin' at it. I don't conceit that a mortal has any right to be revengeful, but in a matter of square justice, — yis, in a matter of square justice, where the right and the wrong stands out like the prongs of a buck, — it sartinly seems as ef the Lord meant that man should tend to the justice while he took care of the vengeance. I don't doubt that the vagabond I caught in the cabin here will git another rakin' over when the Lord takes him in hand; but I gave him enough of honest reckonin' to sarve Divine parposes while he lives on the arth."

While the conversation had been going on, the Trapper had been clearing the table of the remnants of the repast, and at the conclusion of his remarks he drew a chair up to the corner of the fireplace, in front of which the stranger had already seated himself, and the two men, so unlike in character, and, we may say, so unlike in appearance, sat for a moment gazing silently into the fire, which roared and flamed loudly and merrily upward.

During all the conversation the dog had been an evident listener. Whenever the Trapper spoke the dog turned his face and looked directly at him; when his master made response he would as attentively look at him. Indeed, had he been gifted with human intel-

ligence and human feeling, and, we may say, with human sense of propriety, he could not have paid closer attention to the dialogue as it proceeded; and now he was sitting upright between the two men, with eyes alert, and with every appearance of interest as to the conversation when it should be resumed.

"Where be yer home?" asked the Trapper suddenly.

"I have no home," said the man.

"Where was yer home?" queried the Trapper again.

"I never had a home," said the man.

The Trapper seemed for a moment disconcerted. He raised his face, and looking at his strange guest said, —

"Where are yer friends, and where be yer family?"

"I have no family," replied the man; "nor have I friends, save one."

"Where's he?" the old man asked.

"He is here," replied the man: "here is the only friend I have in the world," and he looked at the dog.

It may have been in answer to his look, it may have been from a fine sense of interpretation of what was being said; but from whatever cause, the dog, when his master said "this is the only friend I have in the world," moved himself closer to the man who loved him, and laying his muzzle on his knee, looked lovingly up to the countenance of one who claimed him as his friend.

"Where was ye born, and what country do ye belong to?" insisted the Trapper.

"I do not know where I was born," returned the man, "and I have no country."

"Stranger," said the Trapper, "I ax yer pardon ef I be meddlin' with yer own business, but ye've come to my cabin and ye are welcome to stay, for I see ye be in trouble. And I've lived on the arth long enough to larn that them that be in trouble have arned a home and paid for it in suffering, and that for sech the Lord intends that every house of the fortunit should be their home. And here ye've come, and here ye can stay and welcome. And I shall not meddle with yer sorrers; for a man's sorrers, like a man's grave, should be respected by the livin', and no stranger should tech either. But it is pleasant in convarse to know who ye be talkin' to, — leastwise, to know his name, — and so I ax ye plainly, what was the name yer mother gin ye?"

"I do not know the name that my mother gave me," said the man.

To say that the Trapper was astonished would but half express his surprise. He sat erect in his chair, and fastened his eyes on the man as if expecting to discern evidence of insanity; but no such evidence could he discover. The man's face and every feature of his face, the calmness of his speech, the decorous propriety of his conduct, substantiated beyond doubt his sanity.

The Trapper had finished his inspection. All doubt of the stranger's sanity had by the inspection been dismissed from his mind. His guest was perfectly

sane; of that he was sure. The conviction only deepened his astonishment. Unable to solve the mystery, and greatly excited at the climax to which the dialogue had conducted him, he exclaimed, —

"For Heaven's sake, stranger, what is yer name? and how shall I call ye?"

"John Norton," said the man, "only parents have a right to name a child. My parents doubtless named me: but those parents I never saw, and that name I never heard. Whether it was a family name or a name denoting character, — a name given in hope or a name given in dread, — I know not. Family I have not. Parents I never saw. By strangers I was reared, and by ignorant strangers named. That name was not a name. I outgrew it. When I came to the knowledge of its giving, I discarded it. Men outgrow names, John Norton, and they get new names; each man names himself. The joys of one man name him, and the griefs of another name him. I have had no joys and therefore joys cannot name me. I have had only grief, and therefore grief must name me. John Norton, you ask me who I am and what is my name. I will tell you. I am THE MAN WHO HAS MISSED IT."

For a full minute the old Trapper said not a word, but sat looking steadfastly at his guest. Outside, the moon shone brightly, and its white light, poured in through the curtainless window, lay, a great white patch, upon the cabin floor, around the white edges of which the aggressive firelight played with many a threatening flicker. The hounds lay sleeping on the

hearth; and the stranger's dog still sat with his head resting on his master's knee, and his eyes turned to his face. At length the old man said, —

"Friend, the night be not half gone, and men of our years sleep but leetle. I have heerd many a story told by the camp-fire, and many a frontiersman's tale when night overtook us on the trail, and we was waitin' for the mornin'; and next to the sound of a fiddle, nothin' stirs me more than a story — 'specially ef it be strange and onusual. And ef ye be willin', I should be glad to hear the story of yer life; for sartin it is that never before did I meet a man without a home — without family — without friends — without a country, and without a name."

For a moment there was another pause. The old man, with the deference born of years, and perhaps borrowed in part from the habits of the Indians with whom he had passed so much of his life, remained silent. At length the man said, —

"You have asked me for the story of my life. You shall have it. It is a singular story. Listen."

And so with his hand resting on the head of his dog, the singular being, in a singular way, proceeded to tell the singular STORY OF THE MAN WHO MISSED IT.

CHAPTER II.

"IT is sixty years next March since a babe, lashed to a broken spar, was washed ashore on the eastern coast. That babe was myself. I came out of the storm, John Norton, and I came out of the depths. A ship was wrecked that night, and not a man was saved, nor a woman, either, — only a babe, — what was the ship's name, — what was the name of her commander, — who owned her, or from what port she sailed? — none ever knew. Whether she came from the east or the west none might tell. In the midst of the ocean, in the midst of darkness, in the midst of storm, she went down, and I alone was saved. Do you know anything of the sea, John Norton?"

The old man kept his silence a moment before answering, and without lifting his eyes he said solemnly, —

"Yis, friend, I know something of the sea!"

"Do you hate it, John Norton?" asked the man with explosive earnestness.

"The Creator made it," replied the Trapper; and the reverence of the tone, more than the words, constituted the answer.

"I care not who made it!" almost shouted the man; "I care not who made it! I hate it! It is wild and wrathful and savage! It thirsts for man's life, and

reaches up the hands of its power only to grasp and destroy. Its smoothness is a deceit; and when it stretches out in its calmness, it stretches out as a lie. It entices man from the shore, it calls him from the bay, it beckons him with its breezes from the safety of the harbor. But when once it has got him out upon its great surface, out from the harbor and the bay and the land where he was safe, then it rises up in its anger, dashes at him in its hate, clutches him with its billows, and drags him down, *down, down* into its hideous depths. Think of the men, John Norton, who have gone down into it! Think of the brave ships that it has swallowed up! Think of the women and children; mothers with their babes, the strong and the tender alike, the wealth and the beauty and the glory of man it has ingulfed! Who can look at the surface of the sea and not think of its bottom, — of the wrecks that are there, — the bones of the dead, and the hideous things, the dreadful children of its depths, that live and sport among them? Oh! I hate the sea, John Norton, as a man hates the murderer of his father and the destroyer of his mother; for in its depths my mother and father lie. And there they have lain for sixty years; lain in that graveless grave, in that tomb without spot and without name, and I have borne the burden of their untimely loss, with all the misery it entailed, till my head is whitening!"

Here the man paused a moment. The flash of excitement died out of his face, and the fingers which had been nervously twitching, became still. In a

moment he asked, speaking in a low and gentle tone, —

"Is it not pleasant, John Norton, to know where your parents are laid after death?"

"Sartinly," said the Trapper. "Even the Hurons mark their graves with some sign; and I've seed many a young chief go to the grave of his father, and lament arter his fashion."

"Is there any grave that it would be pleasant for you to visit, old Trapper?"

"There be a grave under a pine-tree, on the shore of the sound in the State of Connecticut, that it would be sort of cheerful-like to look at agin; and I have conceited that the pups and me might make a journey in that direction next summer, onless the boy that be livin' comes into the woods. Still, it's no great matter," continued the Trapper; "I often tell Sport, there, that it's no great matter, for I know that the boy sees that it's well kept."

"Yes, it is pleasant," said the man, "for the children to visit the graves of their parents. In the cities the living take great pains with their graveyards, and lavish their money to make them beautiful. And many a time have I been, when I was weary and hungry, and stood at the entrance and seen those who were left come to visit the graves of those who were gone. Many of them brought flowers, and I have followed on after them, and seen them go to the graves of their parents, and lay the flowers on the mounds. I forgot my weariness as I looked, and my hunger, too, John

Norton. It was a blessed sight. I could imagine the comfort and consolation they found in doing it. And more than once have I leaned my head on some marble slab and wept that I myself might never see my parents' graves, — never see where my father was laid, or let fall the tribute of my tears on the mound beneath which my mother slept. It is a dreadful thing, John Norton, not to have even a grave to love on the earth. It is a worse thing yet not to know what your father's name was, old man. But I have never had a grave to love, and I have never known my father's name, nor do I know my race nor the country where they lived."

Here the man paused again. Long and earnestly he gazed into the fire, while his mind wandered back to the time of his earliest recollections. He even allowed to pass unnoticed the mute caress of his dog, that twice rubbed his head against his knee, twice lapped his hand with his tongue, twice looked into his face, but, receiving no notice from his preoccupied master, turned his own face sorrowfully away, as if he felt his inability to relieve his master's spirit from the burden that was on it.

"Ye said ye was washed ashore when ye was but a leetle babe," said the Trapper, at last breaking the silence.

"Yes," said the man; "I was washed ashore, — washed ashore at the break of day. The sea that had swallowed up my parents rejected me. The waves that had murdered them cast me, as if in mockery, upon

the beach, unhurt. A fisherman found me, took me to his hut, and there I was reared. They gave me a name — no matter what that name was; — they had no right to give me a name. Those who could name me were dead. Do you think any one but a parent has a right to name a child, John Norton?"

"I suppose they did the best they could," replied the Trapper; "they'd got to call ye something, and I suppose they did the best they could."

"Perhaps they did," said the man.

"Did they treat ye well?" queried the Trapper.

"No; they beat me, and kicked me, and cursed me," he replied in a tone that bordered on bitterness.

"Why did they beat ye?" asked the Trapper.

"They beat me," answered the man, "because I was not theirs; because I came to them unsought, came to be a burden to them. I was their plague and torment, because they did not love me. All children that are not loved are plagues and torments. Only love can find happiness in the wants of a child; only love can bear with patience the toils by day and night that the coming of a child brings to a house. They did not love me because I was not theirs, and had no right to be where I was. I do not blame them; what right had I to be? They were poor; what right had I to eat their bread? They owed me nothing, and yet they had to give."

"But ye sartinly could help 'em arter ye were growed," said the Trapper. "It don't take long for a boy to git big enough to arn the leetle he eats and the leetle he wears."

"I never earned a cent for them," retorted the man, "not a cent did I ever earn for them."

"That wasn't right," said the Trapper. "Why didn't ye make the best ye could of yer lot and work for yer livin', as other boys has to?"

"Because," replied the man, "their work was on the sea, and I would not put my foot in a boat. And when they used to drag me aboard, I used to scream and cry and crouch down in the bottom, I was so frightened to go out upon the sea."

"Why was ye so frightened to go out upon the sea?" queried the Trapper.

"Because," almost shouted the man, "I saw dreadful things in the sea. I saw ships going down! — sinking, sinking, sinking, mile after mile, into its depths, with their masts all standing and sails all set, and men and women on their decks. And I used to see great and horrid creatures swimming about in the depths, — things with mouths bigger than their bodies; things that eat nothing but men, and women, and children, that the sea sends down to them; things with great eyes that leered at me and winked at me; things with claws that kept reaching up after me, — claws that opened and shut, as if eager to get hold of me, and pull me down that they might eat me up. And I never went out upon the sea that I didn't see a man and a woman lying at the bottom — lying side by side — with their hands clasped tightly together, while the great hideous creatures of the sea were swimming around them and over them. And I knew the man

was my father, and the woman was my mother, — a father without a name, and a mother that I knew not what to call. And I used to shriek, and scream, and crawl under the thwarts of the boat, crazy with fear. And when I got ashore I would run into the woods, and keep running, until I fell down from weariness. That is why I didn't work for them, because their work was on the sea, and I could not go upon the sea because I saw such dreadful things in it and was so frightened."

"What did ye do, finally?" said the Trapper.

"Do?" said the man, "I ran away. I ran away from the house that was never a home to me; — from the house that had no father and mother in it; from the house where I had no right to be; — a boy without a home, without father or mother, without a country, without a name, and without a friend."

"Where did ye spend yer childhood?" asked the Trapper.

"Childhood! God in heaven!" almost screamed the man, "I never had a childhood. How could a boy, without father or mother, without a home, without any one to love him, have a childhood? I was old when I was young; I had no mind as a boy, no heart as a boy, because I had no surroundings to draw a boy's mind out or make a boy's heart feel."

"Where did ye git yer vittals?" interrogated the Trapper.

"Food! I never had much food. I ate roots, and nuts, and berries, and apples, for years. I never ate at

a table unless by chance. I had none to provide for me, and so I provided for myself. I found what I could, and I stole what I couldn't find, — stole to satisfy my hunger. Do you think that was stealing, John Norton?"

"I conceit not," said the Trapper; "leastwise, I conceit the Lord keeps a kind of privit reckonin' in sech cases, and sorter eases up on it in the Jedgment."

"If there be justice in heaven, it is so," said the man, "for no man can sin without knowledge. And I had no knowledge of right and wrong, and my acts were acts of necessity. Did you ever see a dog steal a piece of meat, old Trapper?"

"Sartin," responded the Trapper. "Rover had a great appetite as a pup, and I had to larn him the Commandments with arnestness. I didn't mind his leetle thievin's, for a pup is a pup, and he will have his pranks; but I came into the cabin one day, and he had not only cleaned the kittle of the soup, but he had a roll of tenderline in his mouth nigh on as big as his body, and I attended to his eddication on the spot, and gin him the idees of right and wrong as clearly as I could with the help of a moccasin."

"I meant," said the man, the earnestness of whose expression the humor of the Trapper had not lightened a shade, "I meant to ask you if you ever saw a starving dog steal a piece of meat?"

"Sartin, sartin," answered the Trapper. "The dogs of the Injuns are always starvin', and I have consorted with the redskins enough to note their habits, and few

be the movements of life about their villages that my eye hasn't seen."

"Then, you know how I used to steal, John Norton. I used to creep up on things; I used to crawl in the grass after things, like a thieving cur driven by starvation, but frightened at every motion I made lest I should be detected. Yes, I used to steal because I was gaunt with hunger, and the wants of my stomach made me a thief."

"Yer lot was a hard un, that's a fact," said the Trapper. "Did they ever catch ye?"

"Yes, they caught me," answered the man.

He said no more, but his eyes darkened, and his brows lowered over them in wrath.

"What did they do with ye?" asked the Trapper.

For a moment the man made no reply. His fingers worked convulsively and his body actually trembled, and then he said suddenly, almost fiercely,—

"John Norton, do you know what a poorhouse is?"

"I have knowed a great many cabins scant of meat," said the Trapper, "when the huntin' was poor; and I've seen the redskins starvin' in their tents, and"—

"I don't mean that," said the man, "I don't mean that. Do you know what the poorhouses are that the towns and the cities build for those who are too unfortunate, or too weak, or too aged, to earn their living?"

"I don't understand ye," said the Trapper.

"I will tell you," said the man, "what a poorhouse is. It is a house which the rich of a town build to put their beggars in, — old men and old women and chil-

dren, born in poverty or born without knowledge of their parents. They build a house and they hire a man to keep that house, and they pay so much money to the man for keeping it. If the man is a good man, and they pay him enough, the poor are well fed. They have beds to sleep in; they have warm clothes and are comfortable. But if the man is a bad man, he takes the money the town gives him for his own use, and the paupers are starved. And they have straw for beds, and they have rags for clothing. I lived two years in a poorhouse, and for months at a time neither old nor young had a mouthful of meat, only coarse bread and potatoes, John Norton. And we slept on straw, and the straw wasn't clean at that, and we had nothing but rags to cover us. We had no medicine if we were sick, and if one of us died they put him in a pine coffin, and buried him in the pauper's corner in the graveyard without even a prayer. And many a Sunday have I sat shivering in my rags, crouched under the south side of the poorhouse, that I might get the little warmth of the winter sun and hear the church bells ring three miles away; and I knew the rich, in their silks and their warm garments, were walking up the carpeted aisle and seating themselves in their cushioned pews and thanking God for their blessings, while the minister told them of His love for man; but three miles away we paupers were starving and freezing."

"What did ye do in the poorhouse?" said the Trapper.

"We made baskets and brooms and whiplashes,"

answered the man. "And the man who kept us sold what we made and kept the money, while we starved."

"Friend," said the Trapper — upon whose mind the vivid description of his strange guest was making a profound impression — "the man who kept ye was a thief. The Lord will gin it to him in the Jedgment. I sartinly hope I may be there when he takes the vagabond in hand; perhaps I can git a lick at him off and on, in the scrimmage."

"He was a church member, John Norton," said the man.

The quiet but intense bitterness and sarcasm with which the simple words were said were lost on the comprehension of the Trapper, for his mind did not understand the relationship and the obligations of charity affirmed in the statement. He looked at his guest a moment with a puzzled expression on his face and said, —

"I don't understand ye, friend."

The man was not slow to perceive the confusion in the Trapper's mind, or his total ignorance of the church as an institution in civilized communities from whence it sprang; but fearing that he might be mistaken should he assume the Trapper's entire ignorance of such a relation, he asked, —

"Do you know what a church is, John Norton?"

"There's a preachin' station down in the valley of the Mohawk, at the south eend of the woods, where I heerd a missioner preach four year agone; but I didn't conceit he knowed jest what he was sayin', for he yelled

like an Injun in an ambushment, and acted sorter onnateral-like in his talkin.' Me and the pups did the best we could to foller the trail of his arguin'; but we couldn't exactly tell where he fetched up, nor the idee the council had when it broke up. No, I don't conceit I know what a church member is. Leastwise, the missioner didn't make it clear to me down on the Mohawk."

"A church member, John Norton, is a man who professes to love God; who professes to love men; and," the man continued bitterly, "the keeper of the poor-house, who starved us and stole our earnings, was a church member."

"The man was a vagabond!" exclaimed the Trapper. "I git the idee now. I caught a church member, as ye call him, on the line of my traps over there under White Face only a month ago. I had seed his tracks off and on ever sence I blazed the line through, and I knowed he was a church member by the way he walked; fur he didn't walk straight and honest-like, like a man who made the line and had a right to be on it, but he sorter sneaked along and stopped behind stuns and trees as ef he knowed he was doin' the devil's arrant, and was afeared an honest man might ketch him at it.

"I bore the thievin's of the scamp until it got onreasonable, and I made an ambush fur him by an otter slide. I sot a big bear-trap at the bottom of the slide, and I burrowed into the ground at the top, and I put the leaves and the mosses and some dried sticks over

my head in a jedicious manner, so I doubt ef even a Huron could have seed the trick of the thing. I knowed he'd come the top of the slide in his thievin' sarch fur an honest man's skins, and sure enough he did. Yis, he come to the top of the slide so I could tech him with the muzzle of my rifle, and he bent over to look at the trap in the water, and he found it — yis, he found it; for I jest reached out the muzzle of my rifle, an' I gin him a punch in the back that sent him down the slide as ef the devil was arter him; and the trap took good hold at the bottom, and I had the vagabond in the jedgment fur sure."

"What did you do to him?" said the man, whose face showed that he sensed both the humor of the old man's blunder as to what constituted a church member, and also the predicament of the thief.

"I preached to him," said the Trapper. "Yis, I preached to the scamp. I made him say the Commandments with the muzzle of my rifle to quicken his mem'ry, and the vagabond showed good mem'ry, fur sartin', fur he started at the beginnin' fair and square, and he went through to the eend without a slip; which I sartinly doubt I could do, although I be an honest man; and he didn't lose any time in puttin' the words in, either; but I conceit that the water and the rifle helped the vagabond, not to speak of the trap. Arter he had said the Commandments, I helped him out and eased off the trap, and we had a leetle more talkin', not to speak of a leetle actin' that I throwed in without any charge."

"What did you do to him?" said the man, whose face was now thoroughly relaxed in evident enjoyment of the old Trapper's experience.

"I cut a withe," said the Trapper, "and I larnt him what the Commandments meant, and what a vagabond can expect when he breaks 'em. I edicated him a few minits better'n any missioner could, fur he owned up before the withe got limber that he knowed the wickedness of stealin', and he swore he'd never tech another man's skins while he lived on the arth; but I don't conceit he kept his word, fur ye could see by the look of his eyes he was a nateral liar as well as a thief; and I dare say he's sellin' skins to-day in the settlements that he never trapped. But he never put his thievin' foot on that line agin, and I doubt ef he'll ever tech another fur in a trap that has 'John Norton' on it."

This episode had evidently been a relief to the feelings of the stranger, for his face had lost its set expression, and the gloom on his brow had given place to a peaceful light. He could evidently recall his past without pain, — dire as it had been, — and speak of it without bitterness, for in a moment he turned brightly to the old Trapper, and asked, —

"Would you like to know how I came to leave the poorhouse, John Norton?"

"Sartinly," answered the Trapper. "Sartinly. Ye was in the devil's own hole, fur sure, and atween the church member and the straw, and the starvin' and the freezin', ye had a hard time on it, as I conceit.

Yis, ye had a hard time on it, and I would sartinly like to hear how the Lord of marcy got ye out of the scrape."

"You may well say the Lord of mercy, John Norton," answered the man, "for he did it; but he did it through my natural gifts, through the powers he had given me, — the powers that had come to me from him through the mother and the father I have never seen, whose love and whose name I have alike missed."

"I don't understand ye," said the Trapper.

"I will tell you," said the man. "I was born with the love of knowledge in me, John Norton, — the love to know how things were made, and how things could be made. I used to open the nuts that I might know how the shells were constructed, and from what point the kernel started to grow. I used to split the apples open before I ate them to find which way their seeds lay, and to learn how they grew round the centre. And I used to wonder what colored their skins, and made them so red and bright. I used to lie by the ant-hills in the warm sun, and see the little busy things come and go, and noticed how they carried their loads; and longed to get inside of their mounds and see what they did, — how they made their chambers, and kept their archways from falling. I have lain by the hour in the leaves, and seen the great yellow spiders weave their webs, and hang their filmy traps in the air that they might catch their food. I climbed a thousand trees and studied a thousand nests, and

found that each bird had his own way and fashion of making his home, and saw that they could do things that man could not do; for I used to work for hours trying to place the hairs and the mosses, the bits of bark and the stolen string, as the bird would place them, and I found I could not do it, John Norton."

"No," said the Trapper; "the creeturs that the Lord has made be wiser than men arter their fashion. Man can trap a beaver, but he can't build his mound; and a wolf will find a way when the hunter and the hound both will lose themselves in the woods. Yis, the creeturs the Lord has made be wiser than men."

"It is even so," said the man; "and as a boy I grew to know it. I did not know at the time that I was a student, but I studied much before I saw a book."

"I don't doubt it," said the Trapper. "Books is good enough in their way, but I never seed more than two or three men that had studied books that wasn't dreadfully ignorant."

"I don't know about that," returned the man, "books contain the knowledge of the world. Books are the mirrors that reflect the learning of the ages. Books are treasure-houses in which are stored the golden sayings of all times. The first joy that came to my life, John Norton, was when I learned to read. An old pauper woman in the poorhouse taught me the letters; and the first book that I read was the Bible."

"It was a good book to begin with, fur sartin," said the Trapper.

"It is a good book to end with, too," said the man.

"It may be," said the Trapper; "but the church member in the trap knew the Commandments, word for word."

The allusion of the Trapper was unnoticed by his guest. At least, he resumed his conversation as if it had not been made.

"The first book I read was the Bible. It took me a year to read it through, but it made the year happy. I read it, not for its wisdom, but for the strange stories that were in it, and the things that delight a boy; but when I was done I knew how to read, and I had a longing to read — a longing I cannot describe. Did you ever long to know a thing, John Norton?"

"Sartin," answered the Trapper; "I run acrost a track in the snow last winter that made me oneasy; fur the track was the track of a panther, but it walked with the legs of a man; leastwise, it made but one track where it ought to make two. And the pups was oneasy, too; fur they wouldn't foller the thing. I trailed it fur two days, fur I had sot my mind on knowin' what the creetur was that the pups wouldn't foller, and whose track didn't tell me his name. And the second day, jest as it was gittin' dark, I come upon him; and it was standin' up like a man, and I must say it started me a leetle; fur I come on it suddenly, and met it face to face. But I drawed on it, fur I was sartin' it wasn't anything human; and I lined the sights to send the lead atween the eyes. My finger was on the trigger, and the pressure was gittin' steady,

fur I'd never seed sech a thing afore, and I was detarmined to know what the creetur was, and" —

"What was it, John Norton?" exclaimed the man, excitedly; for the narration of the old Trapper's strange experience had startled him, as it well might. For who could guess what a creature might be whose track was the track of a panther, but that walked with the legs of a man? And at the point at which the Trapper — standing face to face with the strange creature — was about to explode his piece, he was unable to restrain his curiosity longer, and had broken in upon the Trapper's narration suddenly, with the question, "What was it, John Norton?"

CHAPTER III.

"A FOOL of a half-breed!" answered the Trapper, evidently enjoying the curiosity of his guest. "Yis, a downright fool who conceited in his craziness that he was an animil, and so wouldn't dress himself like a rational bein', but had managed to git himself inside of a panther's skin, and he had done it clever too; fur even his face was covered with the pelt; and ef he hadn't opened his mouth and let out a stream of his gibberin' as I drawed on him, he'd found his senses in etarnity, quick as powder could barn — fur, dusky as it was, I'd got the line right, and my finger was gittin' heavy on the trigger. Yis, his gibberin' saved him, fur he sartinly looked like the animil whose skin he wore in the place of clothes, and the panthers and me have a sort of runnin' account, and I wipe the slate — as the storekeepers say in the settlements — as often as I git a chance."

"What did you do with him, John Norton?" asked the man.

"Do with him?" exclaimed the Trapper, "I couldn't do anything with him. Ye see he was crazy as a loon, and he hadn't no sense. Ye couldn't git him to talk like a knowin' person, but he'd howl and screech and gibber and jump round ye, and squat down and make a spring at ye as ef the old feller himself was in him.

And I sartinly guess he was by the way he acted. Did ye ever see a crazy person, friend?"

"Yes, we had three lunatics in the poorhouse," replied the man.

"I don't understand ye," said the Trapper.

"I said," returned the man, "we had three crazy folks in the poorhouse."

"Sartin, sartin, I understand," returned the Trapper. "No, it don't make much difference what ye call 'em; one name's as good as another, when a man has lost his senses, fur all that's worth namin' has sorter gone out of him. I shouldn't wonder ef lu*nat*ics was a pretty good name fur 'em; but we call 'em crazy folks here in the woods. But don't ye forgit to tell me how ye got out of the poorhouse, fur atween the straw and the starvin' and the church member and the lu*nat*ics, ye must have had an infarnal time, and I'd like to know how ye got out of it."

"It came about in this way," said the man: "it was the law of the town that when any pauper child reached the age of fourteen, he should be apprenticed to some trade by the town authorities, or should be bound out to a farmer, unless he was adopted into some family where his support should be guaranteed. Well, I had lived two years in the poorhouse, and the time had come for me to be sent out. And one day in early spring I was sitting on the south side of the house, whittling. I used to whittle a great deal. I had a great knack in making things with the knife, — you know some boys have a great knack at whittling?"

"Sartinly," said the Trapper. "There's a man up in the St. Regis that they say has been whittlin' for more'n fifty year steady. A trapper that I met on Deadwood was tellin' me, this fall, that he knowed him. And he said that he would whittle all the time; that he'd stop in his eatin', and go to whittlin'; that he'd git up in the middle of the night and go to whittlin'. And he said — but I conceit he may have stretched it a leetle — that the man started to go down to the store one mornin' and that about half the way down there was an old pipperidge stump. Well, he come along to this stump. Ye see he'd seed it a good many times, and had a kind of a hankerin' to git at it. So when he got in front of this stump, he stopped and begun to look at it, and arter he had looked at it fur a few minutes sorter arnest-like, he fetched his jack-knife out of his pocket, and arter rubbin' it a few times up and down on the calf of his boot to git the edge right, he began to whittle at the stump. Did ye ever whittle a bit of pipperidge, friend?"

"I don't think I ever did," said the man.

"Well," responded the Trapper, "then ye have no idee what pipperidge wood is. I made a ramrod once of pipperidge, and it took me nigh all winter off and on to dress the pesky thing smooth. And arter I'd got it all right, and polished it off with a bit of sanded buckskin, I sot it up agin the edge of the table; and, in less than two minutes, Rover, — he was a pup, then, — who was cuttin' up his antics round the room, run agin that ramrod and broke it square off in the middle."

"What did you do then?" asked the stranger, laughing as much at the expression on the Trapper's face as at the humor of his experience.

"I didn't do anything," responded the Trapper. "Ye see, there wasn't anything I could do that would sort of relieve me. There's some feelin's that a man can express; but there be some that ye can't git out of ye in words. Then I had kind of an idee ef I said anything I might git mad; for I was a good deal riled inwardly, and I think talking sorter helps a man to git mad when he is riled; and the less ye say under sech sarcumstances the better, I conceit."

"Perhaps it is," said the man. "But what did the man do who started to whittle the pepperidge stump?"

"Remember, I don't vouch that it's gospel truth I'm tellin' ye; fur I had it second-hand-like, and I've noted that things that come second-hand be very apt to git a good deal mixed. But the trapper that camped with me on Deadwood said that the man whittled at that stump all day, and then he built a fire and whittled at it all night, and that when his wife come to look him up, — fur she was a leetle worried what had become of him, — he sent her back arter some vittals, and jest camped down on that stump and whittled at it nigh on to a week, until he had whittled it clean down to the roots; and then went down to the store and got him the pound of sugar he started for, and went back home as ef nothing had happened."

"Well," said the man laughing, and his poor, thin face, marked with its lines of strength and its lines of

weakness alike, took the finest illumination when he smiled, "I don't think I ever whittled like the man the trapper told you about; but I used to love to whittle, and I have made many curious things with my jack-knife. And one day, as I was saying, I was sitting on the south side of the poorhouse, whittling. I was making a top that I could spin in the air. It was hollow inside, and I cut holes in it through which the air could enter in a strong current when in revolution, and other holes through which it could pass out. And I found that these holes might be cut in such a way that the top would make a very pleasant sound when it was spinning; and it used to spin a great while, and it would go up a great ways into the air, and the longer it went the faster it spun."

"Lord!" said the Trapper, "that was funny. I should eenamost think ye might have made one that would never have stopped."

"I thought so, too, John Norton," said the man, "I thought so, too. And I really think it might be done; but I am not certain. I've come so nigh doing a great many things, and missed them after all, that I am not so positive as I used to be."

"That's it, friend," said the Trapper "years makes a man onsartin about a good many things that seemed easy when he was younger."

"It is true," responded the man gravely, "we learn the limitations of our powers only after many trials; but I have noticed, and I often tell 'Lucky,' that what is impossible at one period of a man's existence becomes

easy for him to do at another. And it may be that by and by, if a man keeps learning and trying and gaining power, he will be able to do everything he undertakes."

"That looks reasonable, fur sartin," said the Trapper. "I shouldn't wonder," continued the old man with the slyest of all twinkles in his eyes, "I shouldn't wonder ef ye made a top in etarnity as big as a barrel or a shanty and set it goin' so it would never fetch up."

The man was too profoundly engaged in interiorily discussing in his mind the possibilities of his invention to notice the humorous incredulity of the Trapper's remark. And after a moment's pause, during which he stooped and caressed the head of his dog, he resumed: —

"I was sitting one day, as I was telling you, south of the poorhouse, in the sun, whittling out a top, when a man came through the gate into the yard, and stopping in front of me, asked me what I was doing? I told him I was making me a top. He looked at it curiously for a moment and said, 'This is a very queer looking top, my boy. I don't understand the principle on which you are making it.'

"'I don't know what you mean by principle, sir,' I said, 'but it will spin very fast, and it will spin in the air, and I can almost make it sing a tune.'

"'I never saw a top spin in the air,' returned the man. 'I dont think yours will. If it will, I will give you a name for it.'

"'It will spin in the air,' I said, jumping up and setting the spring, 'see here!' and I sent it up into the

air with all the strength I could command. And it went up and up and up."

"Heavens and arth!" said the Trapper, "did it actally go out of sight? Ye orter to have invented somethin', as ye call it, to have pulled the thing down arter a while, or it would be a kind of losing operation to spin 'em, fur sartin."

"Oh!" said the man, "it came down after a while; but what seemed to astonish the gentleman most was that it played one set of tunes going up, and another set of tunes coming down."

"Yer top was a good deal like human beings," said the Trapper.

"Perhaps so," said the man, smiling pleasantly into the face of the old Trapper. "But be that as it may, the gentleman was very much astonished, and he said that I had not only made a top, but discovered a new principle of aërial pressure,—a principle of great value, he said, not only for the entertainment of the young, but with possible industrial uses in its application which would be of commercial value; and he said he'd name the top according to the principles and results it suggested, and he called it the 'Aërial Melaphonal Top.'"

"Lord!" said the Trapper, "that was a ripper of a name. Did the man act nateral-like arter he got it out? I think he ought to have done somethin' fur ye arter givin' such a name to yer top."

"He did!" said the man earnestly. "He did more for me than any man that ever lived."

"What did he do fur ye?" queried the Trapper.

"He took me from the poorhouse, and he took me to his home, and that home he gave to me; and in it I had joy, and in it I had suffering; and the joy was the finest I ever had, and the pain was the sharpest I ever felt. But the joy I had came from his strength, and the pain I had came from my weakness. Yes, he took me from the poorhouse, and he gave me a home. Do you know what a home is, John Norton?"

"Sartin," responded the Trapper; "here be a home." And the old man looked affectionately at the two hounds, and then he looked at the wall from which the two picture-frames hung, — the one filled and the other empty, — and he repeated as if more to himself than to his guest, —

"Sartin; here be a home."

The stranger's eye had followed the direction of the Trapper's glance as he looked at the hounds, and also as the old man lifted his eyes to the wall on which the filled and empty picture-frames were hanging. His eyes lingered on the frames for a moment, and in the quickness of his sympathy he sensed the circumstances suggested by the face of Herbert, and the empty frame hanging by its side, and the loving glance which the old man had given them, and he said, speaking to his host, —

"Yours?"

"Yis, the boys be mine," said the Trapper.

"One alive and one dead?"

"The boys be both livin'," said the Trapper.

"Where are they?" asked the man.

"Henry camps in the settlements," responded the Trapper. "The Lad camps higher up."

There was a pause for a moment, and then the two men, so unlike in appearance, so unlike in fact, so unlike in opinions, so widely apart in education, both seasoned with years and white-headed, looked involuntarily into each other's eyes a moment, and then the stranger said, —

"I understand."

And then there was another pause.

Not an unpleasant study for an artist: the two aged men looking into the firelight, and looking beyond the firelight with the far-sightedness of untechnical but profoundest faith. The great logs all aglow. The hounds sleeping on the hearth. The stranger's dog sitting erect, with his large, bright eyes on the face of his master. The flashes of firelight flaming and fading on the wall, and playing hide-and-seek with the shadows in the corner; and through the window a glimpse of the white world outside, — the moon in the cold blue sky and the scintillating stars shining brightly down.

For several minutes the silence lasted, and then the stranger said, —

"You have found a home, John Norton, where most find only a hut; for you have brought love into it, and the angels of heaven would be homeless in the celestial mansions if love was not with them in the places of

their abode. And in the dwelling of the man who took me from the poorhouse I found love, — the love between husband and wife, which I had never seen; the love of parents for a child, and the child's love for parents, — nor had I ever seen that before. And I found more, John Norton. I could not believe it at first, it was so strange: love for the outcast; love for the pauper; love for the boy whose father and mother were in the depths of the sea, and who had found kicks and curses and cruelty from the time he was old enough to be kicked and cursed and ill-treated, but had never found love;" and here the man broke down, his lips twitched, and for a moment he struggled against his feelings, and then he placed his long, thin fingers over his face, rested his elbows on his knees, and wept. His mute companion lifted his muzzle to the thin hands spread over the face and lapped the tears that fell through between the thin fingers, and trickled down the back of the thin hands.

The Trapper never even looked towards his guest; he even, with the innate modesty of true reverence, half averted his face as if he would not intrude even with a glance into the sacred enclosure of the man's griefs. After a while the man raised his head, wiped the tears from his eyes with the sleeve of his coat, placed both hands on either side of his dog's face, and caressed him for a moment, saying, —

"Lucky, you are a good dog. Lucky, you are the best dog in the world;" and then to the Trapper, "John Norton, you will overlook the exhibition of my

weakness. I am not as strong as I used to be, and the memories of that far-off and that happy day which I had in the home of my benefactor overcame me."

"Friend," said the Trapper, "I've lived nigh on to eighty year, and I've consorted with many people, and I've seed the joys and sorrers of my kind, and I've seed strong men weep like wimen; and there be grief that is stronger than courage, and the tears that be honest be fur a man's honor, and I honor ye in yer grief, and I respect ye in yer sorrers. I trust ye found the home of the man that took ye in a pleasant place to live in."

"I did, I did!" exclaimed the man. "Only He that seeeth all things, and knoweth the feelings of all hearts, knoweth the joys that I found in that house; for there I found books and opportunities of learning, and I became as a son to my benefactor, and there I lived ten years, and in those ten years I found the possibilities of heaven. I studied, and learned, and grew wise. The man was a scholar himself, and he taught me all his wisdom, — and his wisdom was not only the wisdom of learning, but the wisdom of knowing and of inventing, and at that I was quicker than he; and together we explored the secrets of nature, and mingled its forces in skilful combination, and directed their strength in a hundred ways for our amusement, and for human good. With him I found what was in the air and in the earth, and in the subtle elements that are not named. And we gave names to these elements that were not known, and we gave forms to powers that were not embodied, for man's amusement and for

man's benefit, and we found startling things, John Norton, — things in the air and the water that no one knew."

"I don't understand what ye could find out in water," said the old Trapper; "that is, anything that ordinary folks don't see."

"John Norton," exclaimed the man, "do you know what is in water?"

"There is a spring over on Silver Mountain, at the foot of the ledge, that I run across last year as I was fetchin' my trail through from the Lawrence, the bottom of which was as yaller as a turnup. It was gettin' on toward night, and, as the spring run a good stream out of it, I conceited I'd better camp down there. It had been a good deal of a tramp, for I'd been takin' up a line, and I had twenty or thirty pelts and nigh on to as many traps on my back, to say nothin' of the flour and the ven'son and the camp fixin's in the pack. Well, I threw up a brush shanty and started a fire and dipped up a pail of water and set it to bilin', fur I thought I'd stir in a few leaves of the tea that Henry brought in last summer; fur the yarb takes powerful hold on me, and I felt sorter ga'nt —a good deal like a canister when the powder is out of it. So I stirred in the tea and steeped it jediciously, and arter I had briled and eat the ven'son, and felt sorter full-like inside, I sot down fur a good, cheerful drink. I cooled the cup to the right pint and took a mouthful, but there didn't a drop of it git further than my back teeth, fur I shet down on it sudden as a

hammer falls when the spring is a strong un, and the trigger works quick to the finger."

"What was there in it?" exclaimed the man.

"The devil was in it!" said the old Trapper; "yis, the devil was in it, ef a man can jedge from the taste; fur that water was full enough of sulphur to physic the settlements fur a year."

"You found a sulphur spring, John Norton," said the man, laughing heartily at the description that the Trapper had given of his experience; "you found a sulphur spring, and sulphur has great remedial qualities in it."

"I didn't notice any sech thing in it," said the Trapper, evidently in the dark as to what the term implied; "I didn't find any sech thing in it, but it may have been there all the same, fur I don't know how them things taste; and ef ye say they was there, I won't dispute ye, but it was infarnal drinkin', fur sartin. I moved on over the ridge afore I breakfasted, till I came to the river of the Tumblin' Falls, where me and the pups found a good healthy drink, and sech as is nateral fur man and beast to quench their thirst with. But ye was speakin' about somethin' ye found in the water. What did ye find in the water?"

"We found," said the man, "that every drop of water was a world in itself."

"It can't be, it can't be!" said the Trapper, "fur a man would drink the univarse up swallerin' at that rate."

"You don't understand," said the man: "it is a

figure of speech that I use; and I said that every drop of water was a world, because it is full of living creatures, — things that creep and swim and have eyes and a structure, — true organisms."

"Now, ye look here, friend," said the Trapper, "ye be a leetle careful-like in yer speech, fur what ye say is beyend reason, leastwise techin' the waters in the woods here. It may be as ye say techin' the streams in the settlements, fur I've noticed that men spile the Creater's work, and it may be that in the towns they do spile the water that the Lord has made fur man's comfort. But there ain't no live things in the spring back of the cabin here, fur it's pure and clear and sweet, and ye can go in the darkest night and drink of it without fear, fur it's a flowin' stream, and it comes from the cleft of the rock, and there was never a wiggler found in any sech water, as the pups will tell ye; fur they and me have drank of it by day and night, and we orter to know."

"We won't discuss it," said the man, yielding good-naturedly and mildly to the Trapper's earnestness; "but I have a glass in my pocket with which I will show you what is in the water sometime — and the water of the spring you speak of, too, pure as it is. And we found also, secrets in the air — forces and powers full of terrible strength."

"That seems reasonable," said the Trapper, "fur many a time have I seed the power of the Lord in the air. I've seed him set it on fire ontil the heavens flamed like the Jedgment; and I've heerd his pieces

explode louder than cannons when the battle is hot and the gunners ram home a double charge. And I've seed the fires of the north flare up as ef the eend of the world was barnin', ontil the pups shivered with fear. Yis, I know there be powers in the air beyend the power of man, but they be powers of the Lord, and sech as man cannot diskiver and the tongue of man may not name."

"But they can be named, John Norton, and they can be discovered, and my benefactor and I analyzed the air and found what was in it, and we could separate its elements and bring its mysteries to light. The fires of the north, as you call them, are a wonder, and science, it is true, has not as yet discovered their cause; but there is nothing in nature that man cannot discover if he be patient and studious enough in searching for the key that unlocks its mysteries."

The old Trapper had followed the speech of his guest with the greatest attention. The inquisitiveness of his own mind, which had found a narrower and ruder sphere of exercise, was nevertheless of so high an order that he could appreciate the same quality in the mind of another, although the field of exercise had been widely different from his own.

"Ye seem to have had a happy time of it in yer studyin' with yer friend. How long did ye stay in the family?"

"I stayed ten years," said the man.

"Was there any children in the family?" asked the Trapper.

"There was one child. Only one child," repeated the man; but no one who did not hear the words spoken could conceive the tenderness of the tone with which he spoke; and no one who did not see his countenance, as he said, "Only one child," could imagine that into a face of such peculiar appearance could come an expression at once so supremely gentle and so supremely sad.

The old Trapper was evidently puzzled how to continue the conversation, for he saw that his question had called up, if not unpleasant, at least sorrowful, memories in the mind of his guest, and his breeding was too fine in its natural courtesy, and his sympathies already elicited by the singular biography to which he had listened, too profound for his strange guest, sitting in front of him, to permit him to say, unless inadvertently, a single word that would be an intrusion upon the secrets of his life.

The man had fallen into a musing mood, and silence reigned in the cabin. The fire burned low. The great logs, nearly consumed, weakened in the middle and fell downward into the warm ashes and the glowing coals underneath, with many a spark and jet of flame. At length the man roused himself from his revery, and said, —

"The motions of the mind are wonderful, John Norton, and thought is swifter than light. Sitting here in your cabin, in the midst of the wilderness, with a stretch of forty years intervening, my mind has journeyed back to the house of my benefactor. Again

have I seen the face of his wife, who was to me as a mother; again have I heard his voice as it sounded in my ears long ago; and again have I seen, with all the vividness of her earthly appearance, when she was young and beautiful, the bright being that made the house in which we lived full of light and joy, — the being that made me ambitious in my studies; whose hand waved me with encouraging gesture from knowledge to knowledge, and whose presence kindled the darkness of my life into the radiance of hope. But the night is far spent, and I have kept you from your slumber. Some other time I will resume my story, if you desire to hear the tale of my life further. If you will give me a blanket, Lucky and I will sleep here by the fire. I doubt if among all the deeds you have done in your life, John Norton, you have ever done a deed of greater goodness than you have done this night; for you have given a man and his dog that were hungry the food that they needed. They were freezing, and you have warmed them. They were without shelter, and you received them to your house. They were lonely, and you have cheered them with your companionship. Two of his creatures have you comforted, and the Lord will give you your reward in the great day."

All this was said gravely, and with that dignity of manner which the simplicity of true, heartfelt gratitude gives to its utterance. Before speaking, the man had risen from the chair, and, as he closed, he bowed to the Trapper, as one who would thus show his appre-

ciation for the favors he had received; while Lucky, the dog, moved in front of the Trapper's chair, and, fixing his eyes on the old man's face, wagged his tail gladly, as if he, too, would make some acknowledgment to his master's host.

"Ye be welcome, friend," said the Trapper, rising from his seat. "Ye be welcome to what ye have had, and ye be welcome to stay so long as ye will. The days be short and the nights long, and at times it be a leetle lonely, though the pups be good company, and the boys come and see me off and on. There be skins in the cabin fit fur a king to sleep on, and yer bed shall be of the softest."

So saying, the Trapper placed a great roll of bear-skins on the floor, and, bringing a blanket from his own bed and a pillow for his guest, he retired to his couch, from which the coming of the man had, hours before, aroused him.

The man spread the skins in front of the fire, and, adjusting the pillow, he gathered the blankets around him and prepared himself for slumber. His dog came to his side, sat down for a moment on his haunches, looked into his master's face, kissed it with his tongue, looked at the fire, wagged his tail happily, and stretched himself by his master's side. The man placed one arm around his body and yielded his senses to repose. The Trapper, lying on his bed with his eyes on the two picture-frames, also prepared for sleep. And so the two men — the one gazing at the objects which suggested the presence of those he loved, one on

the earth and one above, but to his simple faith both equally alive; — the other with his arm over the body of his dog, whose love had made him the companion of his wanderings, and the companion, too, in his wants, — fell asleep.

Outside, the world was white and cold and still. No stain on the earth, no cloud in the sky, no sign in all the white expanse below, or the blue expanse overhead, that Nature was conscious of human wants or human woes. But above the sky sat One who saw not only the two men sleeping in the cabin, the hounds on the hearth, the dog by his master's side, but all on the earth, whether waking or sleeping, whether happy or sad; — not only saw, but carried in his bosom their cares, their losses, and their sorrows, as if they were his own.

CHAPTER IV.

It was nigh on to a month before "The Man Who Missed It" again alluded to his experiences. Indeed, he had not been physically well; the labors, and above all, the repeated misfortunes of his life had, beyond doubt, materially affected his vital powers. And it was evident that, previous to his finding the Trapper's cabin, he had passed through a period of perhaps aimless wandering, during which, without positive design, he had passed beyond the region of the settlements which fringed the wilderness, and penetrated into its depths utterly unprovided for such a serious journey. Exposure by day and night to the storms that beat upon him, and the winds whose chilling blasts pierced his thin and scanty garments, in connection with lack of sleep and lack of food, had served to lessen still more the little strength which the adverse struggle of his life had left him. Indeed, he might well be likened to some ship which, for half a century, had been put to hardest service, and which had not only borne for years the buffeting of many tempests, but had been weakened through all its structure by the insidious influence of a climate that had sapped the strength of its timbers, and, while it had, indeed, been blown by the gale which threatened its destruction to a tranquil harbor, it had, nevertheless, entered in such condition

that those who knew it best felt doubtful that it would ever again leave the harbor, between whose headlands it had found the sorely needed refuge.

The day following the conversation which we have narrated in the preceding chapters found the Trapper's guest not only indisposed to talk, but even indisposed to move. He rose from his slumber with the looks of a man who rises unrefreshed. He ate but little at breakfast, and, after the meal was finished, he took his seat in the easy-chair at one end of the great hearth-stone, as if his weakness, long resisted by effort of his will, had overpowered him at length, and compelled him to quiet. He even dozed as he sat in the chair, sleeping for a few moments, and then rousing himself with a sudden start At last he said, turning toward the Trapper in an apologetic and deprecating tone, —

"I trust, John Norton, you will excuse my inattention to the duties, and what might be the pleasures of the day, but I am very tired. I have not slept much lately, and that probably accounts for the feeling which possesses me. I feel as if I would like to sleep forever, if it wasn't for Lucky here. Lucky," said he, speaking to his dog, "if it wasn't for you, Lucky, I would like to go to sleep and sleep forever."

The dog, whom the night's sleep had fully refreshed, rubbed his head against the knee of his master, and then, putting his paws in his lap, stretched his mouth to his master's cheek, and caressed it with his tongue.

The man put both arms around the neck of his dog, laid his face against his shoulder, and when he lifted

his head the Trapper noticed that tears had fallen into the shaggy coat.

"I tell ye what I think ye'd better do, friend," said the Trapper; "ye had better go to sleep. Ye look to me like a man that has been on a long trail, which has led principally up hill, and the tramp has been a leetle too much fur ye, and nater has sorter gin out. Yis, what ye want is sleep, and my advice to ye is to jest take to the skins agin, and sleep it out ef it takes a week. Ye won't be distarbed, fur the pups and me be quiet folks, and the neighbors ain't plenty. Yis, ye'd better turn in and sleep it out, that's my advice."

"May I sleep as long as I want to?" said the man, — and he spoke as a boy speaks when asking the greatest of favors — "may I sleep as long as I want to?" he repeated, looking the old Trapper in the face, and rising feebly from his chair.

"Sartin, sartin," answered the Trapper; "there's four good months afore the trout be movin' in the rapids, or the big uns will strike a hook in the lake. Yis, ye've sartinly got time enough; that is, ef ye don't lose any time in gittin' at it. So jest bunk down in the skins with yer dog, and me and the pups will run the shanty while ye are sorter enjoyin' yerself."

The man needed no second bidding. He made him a bed of skins at one end of the cabin, and, throwing himself upon them, in less than a minute his senses were locked in profound repose. The dog went to the old Trapper, looked into his face, wagged his tail happily, gave a gleeful jump and twist of his body, and

then trotting to the couch of skins, he curled himself up beside his master, and went to sleep himself. But if his master moved even to the least degree, the dog's eyes came open with a snap. He would lift himself on his forward legs and look attentively into his master's face for a moment, then curl down and close his eyes again.

"That's a knowin' dog," said the Trapper, "ef his bristles be stiff. It was a most onrational cross, fur sartin, and no sensible hunter would resk it. Fur the dog of blood is the only one to depend on when the ground be dry, the chase long, and meat scarce. Yis, the cross was sartinly onreasonable; but the dog is a good un, ef he does look like thunder."

The object of these critical and humorous remarks knew beyond doubt that he was alluded to; for as the old Trapper closed, he opened one eye and fastened the bright orb on the old Trapper's face, while the other remained shut, and he gave the floor two or three inquisitive thumps with his tail. A more quizzical look certainly was never seen on a dog's face, nor, taken in connection with the look, a more humorous wag of the tail.

The Trapper stood and gazed steadily for several seconds at his guest's queer companion. He even closed one eye himself as if he would return the humor he received, and then his great face began to wrinkle, and the smile, beginning at the corners of his mouth, clomb up the deepening lines as a boy, laughing as he goes, climbs the rounds of a ladder, until it found a

lodgment in his eyes, whence it remained looking quizzically and gleefully out. The longer he looked at the dog the more the smile deepened, until it burst into a laugh. His mouth opened to its widest stretch, and, placing a hand on either knee, he indulged his silent mirth to the utmost. A strange spectacle, truly, to see a man and a dog thus exchanging humor; but that the animal enjoyed the passage of fun was evident; for the orb which was fastened on the Trapper's face grew brighter and brighter as the pantomime proceeded, and the stumpy tail wagged its sympathetic appreciation with increasing heartiness.

It was evident that the Trapper doubted his ability to longer restrain his mirth; and fearful lest he should disturb his guest, who was still asleep, he slid out of the door, saying in mirthful gasps, —

"The cross — is sartinly — on-reas-on-able; but the dog — is a good — un!" and once outside the door, indulged his pent-up feelings to the fullest extent.

Thus several weeks passed, and the exhausted frame of his guest, ministered unto by nourishing food, and perhaps by what was better, abundant sleep, recovered to a great degree its strength; and with the improvement to his physical health was observable, also, an equal improvement in the tone of his feelings and the hopefulness of his spirit. He had in the mean time talked with the Trapper on many themes, and showed himself in his conversations to be a scholar of profound attainments; but not once had he ever alluded to his past life. And the Trapper forbore, from a sense of

native delicacy, to question him concerning himself. He had not only shown himself a good talker, but a good listener also; and many were the tales connected alike with war and peace with which the Trapper had entertained him in the long evenings as they sat by the fire together. It is doubtful if two men were ever before brought together who could give each unto the other such instruction and entertainment. For the worlds in which they had lived, and whose lessons they had learned, were entirely unlike, and the knowledge and experience of each were equally novel and interesting to the other. Thus the two men, both ripened with years and both wise in their way, brought strangely together, became intimate companions. Their mutual respect deepened into friendship as they sat in the long evenings exchanging their opinions and their experiences; and by Christmas-time it would not be too much to say each seemed to the other like a life-long acquaintance, and not as men who one short month before saw each other's face for the first time.

It was Christmas Eve. The Trapper and his guest were sitting in front of the great roaring fire. The hounds were on the hearth, and the stranger's dog by his knee. The Trapper had noticed that his guest had been in an unusual mood during the day. Now he had been restless, walking about the cabin, going to the narrow window, looking out as if he expected to see some one approach; and then he would seat himself in his chair, and, resting his chin in his hand, gaze fixedly upon the floor, lost in profound abstraction.

But as the day declined, and evening came on, a more gentle and solemn mood took possession of his spirit, causing the prevalent expression of his countenance to be one of sadness.

The old Trapper had refrained from noticing the peculiar disquietude of his guest, and even now continued to forego the customary conversation lest he should disturb the musings of his friend. Thus the two men sat on Christmas Eve in front of the great fire, silently gazing into it.

"It's thirty years ago to-night," the stranger said, speaking at last; and he said it as if speaking more to himself than his companion, "it's thirty years ago to-night since she passed away." And then he said, turning to the Trapper and repeating the same words, changing the tone of his voice to one of address, "It is thirty years ago to-night, John Norton, since an event occurred which has influenced my life up to this day. Did you ever see one that you loved die, John Norton?" asked the man, looking the Trapper steadily in the face.

"I have fought on many fields," said the old man, "and I've been in many a scrimmage where men fell round me like autumn leaves. I've seen the gineral and the privit struck down, and I've seed the young man and the old lie side by side; and many a comrade have I buried arter the fight was over, or the scrimmage ended. Yis; I have seed many that I loved die."

"I know you have been in many battles, John Nor-

ton," replied the man, "and I can well imagine that you have lost many friends; but did you ever lose one who was more than a friend, — one whom you loved with all the power of your being, and whom, in losing, you lost all that made life valuable?"

"I have seed many die, both young and old," said the Trapper evasively, "and there be graves I shall never forgit; but they died in the Lord's app'intment, and the Lord gave me strength to bear like a man the loneliness that their goin' made."

"How did he strengthen you to bear your loneliness, John Norton?" queried the man.

"The ways of the Lord be many," answered the Trapper, "and he comes and goes on trails that man cannot see. He is as the wind among the trees, — you feel the motion, but you see not the power. The Lad used to say that thoughts come at his biddin', and I conceit that the Lad in his simpleness was wiser than many that be knowin'; fur more'n once when standin' above graves I've had thoughts come that strengthened my heart."

"What thought, old man, has strengthened you most?" interrogated his companion.

"The thought of meetin' when the arth is ended," was the response.

"Do you think," said the man, "that beyond the grave we shall meet the friends gone on before?"

"I sartinly conceit we shall," said the Trapper.

"Do you think," persisted the man, and his eyes shone brightly, and he made a gesture like the gesture

of appeal to the Trapper, "do you think the spirits of the departed can revisit the earth, and are conscious of what we do, and say, and think?"

"It may be that they can," answered the old man.

"I know they can!" exclaimed his companion. "I know they can! I know a spirit can return either to comfort or condemn the living."

For a moment the old Trapper made no reply. He looked with a steady gaze into the glowing eyes of his companion, as if inwardly debating whether the misfortunes of his life had not to a certain extent unsettled his intellect, and after a moment's inspection he asked in a respectful tone, —

"How do you know, friend, that a spirit can return?"

"Because," said the man, "once each year, for thirty years, has the evidence been given me. Thirty times since she passed from this earth has her bright spirit returned and made me aware of her presence. Thirty times on the same night, and at the same hour, and in the same manner, has she made me aware that the ties which bound us together are not broken, and the love that she gave me has not cooled."

For several minutes nothing further was said; the Trapper rose and placed a couple of fresh logs on the fire and reseated himself. He had scarcely done so before his guest moved his own seat so as to bring himself face to face with the Trapper, and said, —

"Old man, for a month I have eaten at your board and slept in your cabin. I have listened to your words

and observed your manner of life. I know you are wise with the wisdom that years give; and that you are good with the goodness that only comes to one who has lived honestly in the world. I have found in you what for years I have looked for in vain, — an honest man. I told you the first evening that we met a portion of my life. I will resume the narration. Listen: —

"You know what I lost in my infancy and childhood: that as a child I was without father, or mother, or name, or country, or home. I will now tell you what I missed in my youth." So saying, the man again resumed the story of his life: —

"In the house of my benefactor, as I told you, I found a home; for in it was love, — the love of husband and wife, the love of parent, and the love of a child. It was a home, also, of finest mood and temper. Kindness and courtesy were the habit of the household. In the ten years that I lived in that house I never heard an unkind word or saw an exhibition of bad temper. A house with evil tempers in it, John Norton, can never be a home."

"Ye have a jedgmatical way of lookin' at most things, friend," said the Trapper. "I lived in a squatter's cabin down on the Mohawk, nigh on to forty year ago, eenamost a month, and the woman that kept the shanty made it lively for us, I can tell ye. Ye see, she had one of them cross-grained tempers that wouldn't stand the least bit of strain, and, bein' naterally tough in its fibre, it made a good deal of noise when it snapped.

Atween the redskins and the whites I've heerd a good deal of rapid talkin' off and on in my life. But that woman had nateral gifts with her tongue, fur sartin; and when she fairly got at it there wasn't room enough in the shanty to hold more'n one at a time. I camped out nights fur the most part, fur she used to git wound up days, and a mighty leetle thing in the evenin' would tech her off; and when she once got a-goin' the Lord of marcy himself couldn't stop her. And yit she was pleasant and chirpy enough ef ye kept on the right side of her, but ye couldn't always tell jest where the right side was; and a man had to be mighty lively at dodgin' to keep on reasonable terms with her. Ye see, I went down to git a tech of the settlements, and become sorter civilized, fur I had heerd a good deal of the pleasant ways they had in the settlements; but a month was enough, and I came back to my cabin in the woods as contented as a bee in his hive."

"But the house in which I lived was the house of peace, John Norton," continued the man, "and such peace as only springs from affection. My benefactor was the noblest of men, and his wife was the gentlest of women. And the daughter — John Norton, do you think that angels are ever born on the earth?"

"It may be," said the Trapper; "yis, it may be occasionally one, off and on. But they don't come often enough to trouble a man with countin' 'em, ef he is reasonably quick at figgers. But it may be ye found one, friend, in the house where ye lived."

"I did! I did!" exclaimed the man, "if ever an

angel was born on the earth, the daughter of my benefactor was one. In body she was beautiful beyond the beauty of most women: a beauty finer than the beauty of form, however perfect, or of feature however regular; for hers was the beauty of mind and of spirit, — a mind that ruled the face in its expression, and a spirit that characterized the countenance with its own gentleness. Her eyes were blue as the sky you have seen at noonday, John Norton; of that peculiar blue which darkens in feeling when the life within grows intense; and all shades of expression could come to them, save of anger. I know not but that they were capable of that; I only know I never saw it in them."

"Perhaps ye gin her no cause," said the Trapper.

"Perhaps not," said the man. "No, none of us gave her any cause to be angry; for we loved her too well for that. Oh, if I could make you see her, old man! Her hair was bright as the sunshine, and almost of the same tint; as if it had the power not merely to attract the rays, but to hold them amid its wavy masses. I have seen such hair in the pictures that the old masters painted of the heavenly ones, but never in womankind since we laid the golden hair from sight, and smothered its sunshine in the grave. Her skin was white as a lily, but through the whiteness the eye could see a hint of pink which now and then came to the surface in warmest hue, when the life within was stirred, in which one might say and feel, too, John Norton, that he saw the sunrise of a soul warm and pure as the morning. But why attempt description?

The years vanish as I speak, and I see her as she was, on the evening she died."

He paused a moment. His face was white. The muscles at the corner of his mouth twitched, and he clutched the arms of the chair in which he was sitting with his hands. He was evidently contending with whatever strength he had against the emotion which rolled in waves of feeling over him, as lifted and moved onward by the impulsive memories of the past. In a few moments he continued, with his hands still clutched on the arms of the chair, —

"It was evening — the evening on which she and I were to be married; the evening on which we were to be married, John Norton, do you understand?" and he looked at the Trapper with eyes already moistened for tears.

"I understand ye," said the Trapper; and he bowed his head unconsciously to his guest, but with a motion of profoundest sympathy.

"We were to be married," repeated the man. "The priest had come; the friends were present, — the father on my right, the mother at the left, the minister in front. The opening words had already been said, when I felt a shiver run through her frame. Startled, I turned. She gasped; she flung her hands on high; she gave one piercing scream, and down at the altar's front my bride fell dead!"

"Good God!" said the Trapper.

For a full minute not a word was said. The Trapper, with startled look and pitying eyes, gazed fixedly

at his guest. The man gazed as fixedly into the face of the Trapper.

"What happened then?" said the Trapper, when the silence had become oppressive.

"I lifted her in my arms," said the man; "I bore her to her chamber, — the chamber that was to have been ours, John Norton, — laid the dead and beautiful body on the bed, drove the friends and parents from the room, locked the door, and watched the night out with my bride. Oh, the talk that we two had that night, John Norton! The pledges we gave and the vows that we exchanged none but the God of the quick and the dead ever knew."

"I sartinly ax yer forgiveness," said the Trapper, "ef my words hurt yer feelin's; but I can't conceit, although ye who mean to be truthful I don't doubt, tell it to me face to face, that the dead ever talk to the livin'?"

"John Norton!" exclaimed the man, and he flung his hands on high with imperative gesture, "I swear by the heavens above, where her spirit has its home, that my bride talked to me that night! And she pledged me a solemn pledge, that once each year, while I stayed on the earth, if I kept my pledge to her, that she would come, if permitted of God, and make her presence known by signs and movements that I could not mistake. And the vow that she made me in death she has kept hitherto, and will keep here and now; for this is the night and" —

He would have said more, but the hounds on the

hearth moved uneasily, woke from their sleep, sat suddenly up on their haunches, and with inquisitive muzzles scented the air, while "Lucky," the dog, moved with some strange feeling of love or fear, crept half up into his master's lap. Either the movements of the hounds, or some cause to the Trapper undiscoverable, had checked the man in his sentence, which he finished in a voice scarcely above a whisper: "*This is the hour!*"

With the words the man rose suddenly from his chair and stood erect in the attitude of listening.

"Have you ears, old man?" ejaculated he. "Then listen, for the steps of my bride are coming to your door!"

What he would have said further cannot be known; for the two hounds that had continued uneasy lifted their muzzles into the air and gave in concert a low, mournful and prolonged cry, while Lucky sank suddenly to the floor, his bright eyes moving from his master's face to the door, and back from the door to his master's face.

Nor was the old Trapper unmoved. Like all whose lives have been lived in the woods, the superstitious element was strongly developed in him. A child of Nature, as he was, the marvellous and the mystical found in him, if not a believer, by no means an unsympathetic listener. The unnatural motions of the hounds whose singular conduct the Trapper had not been slow to notice; the impressive manner of his guest, and that stronger but more subtle and indescrib-

able influence which one person, when powerfully moved, can exert upon another, conspired to produce upon him an effect which in other circumstances would have been impossible. Be this as it may, he too had risen from his chair with his guest, and thus, amid the profoundest silence, the two men stood in the attitude of listening.

Was it the wind? Was it more than wind? Certainly something moved in the air outside and overhead of the cabin, — moved as wind might move, and yet it was more of a motion than a sound, — a motion that seemed to come on and come down as from a height, — come down and alight. And then — what was that? Was it a footstep in the snow? A fox, perhaps, brushing swiftly by through the drifts. A rabbit bounding lightly round the corner of the cabin. And yet the motion that made the sound, if sound there was, was slower than the quick step of a fox, and heavier than the light motion of a hare.

"*Hark!*" said the man; and he said it in a whisper, while his face flamed; "*she is coming!*"

Was it imagination? Was it fancy? Was it a trick played on the reason by excited nerves? Was it reality? Something was coming. What? For up the path made in the snow toward the hunter's cabin came a step, — a light step, and yet a step that seemed to hurry as if running on swiftest errand, as if fulfilling some mission of need: came swiftly on, — came to the threshold of the cabin door, and — stopped. For an instant, silence, and then a knock sounded plainly and distinctly on the panels.

Whether the words came from him as the direct result of the tension which he was under, or whether they were the result of habit, and spoken involuntarily, it would be vain to inquire, but no sooner had the rap sounded on the door than the old Trapper lifted his head, and facing the entrance, said, —

"Come in!"

For a moment a hand fumbled with the latch, and then the door suddenly opened, and in the open doorway, plain to sight, stood a woman!

The man flung his arms into the air, gave a moan, and fell, as if dead, to the floor.

CHAPTER V.

YES, a woman, there was no doubt of that. No spirit ever had such face, and eyes, and mortal form. A face of earthly beauty, and a form whose perfect poise, and active, buoyant life spoke not of spiritual but of perfect mortal mould. A young woman, from whose face looked forth profound astonishment at the spectacle she beheld: the man lying on the floor; the dog, Lucky, scratching at his breast; the Trapper with every feature of his face suggestive of surprise.

"What have I done?" said the girl. "Is he dead?" and she looked at the man lying on the floor where he had fallen, and the dog, Lucky, who was tugging at his garments with piteous cries, as if to him his master was asleep, and he would wake him.

"Dead! no," said the Trapper; "ye see, he isn't very strong, and a leetle onsteady in his head, as I conceit; and yer comin' in suddenly on him, when he was expectin' somebody else, took him all back; but he'll come to in a minit ef ye'll fetch me the dipper of water there;" and the Trapper moved to the side of the man who had swooned, knelt beside him, loosened his necktie, and began to chafe his wrists.

The girl quick as flash slipped her hands from her mittens, threw off her jacket, and casting aside her hood glided to the pail that stood at one end of the

hearthstone, and stooping over the prostrate man began to sprinkle the water with skilful fingers on his face.

As she had thrown aside her hood and jacket, her hair had escaped its fastenings. It was bright auburn in color, and abundant, and fell with many a wave and curl even to her waist.

"Whom was he expecting?" asked the girl, as placing the dipper on the floor she seized the other wrist, and began to chafe it with her own soft and glowing palms.

"It's hard to say, young woman. Yis, it's sartinly hard to say who the man was expectin', or who the old fool called John Norton was raaly lookin' fur when ye opened the door. Ye see, the man has had his ups and downs, and the downs have had the best of it fur the most part; and he was tellin' me the story of his life, and he'd got to an interestin' pint, fur he was tellin' me that the girl he loved died on his weddin' night, and the night was Christmas Eve, and that her sperit always appeared to him on the same night each year, and at a certain minit, too, and that the minit had come. And as he told the story with a good deal of arnestness, it had sorter took hold of me. And when he jumped up and said she was comin', ye see I riz too; and by the Lord-o'-marcy, young woman, when I heerd yer light steps travellin' up the path and heerd ye stop at the door, — well, ye see, here was the man that said the sperit was comin', and there was yer steps, and the pups actin' onnateral, and I eenamost thought the sperit had come. And when I jest told ye

to come in, I sartinly expected that an angel would take me at my word; and I conceit they did," said the old man, as he looked into the face of the girl, whose eyes, as her hands continued to chafe the man's wrist, were looking into the old man's face with an expression half of wonder and half of amusement in them. "Yis, I conceit they did," and his eyes twinkled and his face beamed with humorous good-nature; "but in a body a leetle too solid fur wings to lift, onless they make 'um of onnateral size in etarnity."

"See," said the girl, "he is coming to himself."

"I shouldn't wonder — shouldn't wonder," said the Trapper. "A faintin' fit is nothin' to be consarned over, ef the shirt-band isn't too tight, water handy, and them who be tendin' to the case don't make too much fuss about it. All ye have to do is to let him lay flat on his back, flirt some water in his face off and on, rub the wrists a leetle, and keep up a kind of cheerful conversation. That's jedicious treatment, as I've noted. There is sech a thing as overdoin' in sech matters," said the Trapper philosophically, "and a man has got to have a good deal of sense to let natur' alone; fur natur' is natur', and ye can't hurry her out of her gait, whether the trouble be in the stomach or the head. But if ye'll not hurry her so as to make her overrun the track, she'll work the scent up in time, and be as sartin of herself as a hound runnin' with a high nose when the buck is in full sight."

At this point the man gave a sudden gasp, and a kind of convulsion shook his frame; at which the dog

Lucky gave a short, quick, joyous bark, and a frisk of genuine happiness.

"He is comin' to," said the Trapper, speaking hurriedly and in a low voice; "ye do well to note the dog" — for the girl had turned her large eyes toward him at his manifestation of happiness, which the Trapper was not slow to observe — "ye do well to note the dog; fur though he came from a most onreasonable cross, the dog be a good un. He be comin' to himself," whispered the Trapper, "and, young woman, don't ye be skeered ef he acts a leetle flighty; fur though he be an honest man, and his knowledge be something wonderful, still, he has his notions. Yis, he has his notions; so don't ye be consarned, ef he acts a leetle flighty."

The caution certainly did not come too soon; for after another gasp had heaved his chest, and another shiver ran through his frame, The Man Who had Missed It, opened his eyes; and as he opened them his gaze fell directly upon the girl. A more rapid or changeful play of features was never seen upon human countenance. It was true he had awoke from his trance. But reason, that sure guide to correct vision, though struggling back from the depth to which she had been thrown, had not yet fully regained ascendency. Had there been an angel indeed before him, the awe of his look could not have been more profound than it was as it rested on the face of the girl. Her hair unbound, in waves of gold flowed over her shoulders, covering them almost from sight; her large expressive eyes were fastened on him, animated to a degree because of the

curiosity, the expectation, and the sympathy which possessed their depths.

The man's face was yet white with the pallor of his swoon. He gazed steadfastly a moment at her, who had seemed to his expectant and indiscriminating vision the bright being he had loved and lost, long years ago. And then he timidly stretched one hand out toward her own, and after an instant's hesitation, as if to summon courage, he gently touched the warm palm with the tip of his finger. Still he acted like one undecided. He struggled up to a sitting posture; passed his thin hand with steady pressure over his temples once or twice; pinched his forehead with his fingers, as if by some physical effort he would recall his wandering faculties; and then as his hand fell to his lap he fixed his eyes again upon the girl, and gazed steadily at her face.

The Trapper's eye was on him, and he noted that, as he gazed, the look of awe died out, and into its place came a look of pain, tempered with gentle sadness.

"Thou art like her," said he at length. "Thy beauty is perhaps as great as hers; but thou art not she. Thou hast come in her place. She was true in coming; she has been true in sending thee; she has kept her promise, old Trapper, and given me the sign."

"What sign did she give ye, friend?" said the Trapper.

"She said she would come each time, save one, and then she would send another, as pure as she, but

happier; and that one should come a year, lacking an hour, before she would come. And when she came at the end of the year, lacking an hour, she would come for me, and we should find our second wedding at an altar where death could not part us. Young woman, thou hast come in her place, — the pledge is kept, and I read the sign. Old Trapper, one year lacking an hour, and then 'The Man Who has Missed It' will be done with missing."

"We shall die at the Lord's appintment, friend," said the Trapper sturdily. "We shall come to the edge of the Great Clearin' when the last step of the trail has been trodden, and not before, sign or no sign. For no man may shorten the number of his steps, and no man lessen the number of hours, and no man may set twelve month beforehand the hour of his death, or the manner of his goin', whether he die in peace in his bed, or be struck down in the scrimmage. Now, friend," said the Trapper, laying hold of him gently, but firmly, "let me help ye up, and do ye git into yer chair; fur ye be weak as a kitten, and I have other work to do, or the Lord has made a mistake in sendin' this young woman here. And now, young woman," he resumed, when he had assisted the man to his chair, "whence came ye? And what evil has befallen ye that ye came runnin' to my door, on a winter's night, when I conceited there wasn't a livin' creetur of my kind within fifty mile of my cabin, and sartinly none like ye, who be from the settlements, as I plainly see, and" —

The Trapper turned absolutely white. For an instant his lips moved, as if struggling for speech, but not a sound issued. At last he said, while the pallor of an awful fear spread over his face, —

"God of marcy, young woman! have ye come from Henry?"

"I don't know whom you call Henry," said the girl, evidently astonished at the dreadful looks of the Trapper's face, — the awful fear and pallor of it as much as at the intensity of his exclamation.

It was a spectacle, indeed, to see the change that came to the Trapper's countenance. The whiteness of a terrible dread vanished, and his cheek took its natural hue. The tightness of his look relaxed, and his fingers, that had been nervously clutched, unclosed from the palm.

"God be praised!" said the Trapper, speaking as a man speaks when his feelings are too tense for silence. "God be praised fur yer ignorance. I thought, mayhaps, the boy was gone, and that my eyes would see his face no more. The grave under the pine is enough. When another of the three be made, may his eyes see it, not mine. But why did ye come?" continued the Trapper, "and what be yer wants?"

"My name is Magnet," said the young woman, "and I came for help. And I want you to be quick; for, though I do not think he is suffering from cold, and though he told me not to hurry, for he was in no pain, yet I know he must be in pain; for" —

"Who is in pain?" said the Trapper; "speak quick,

young woman, and put on yer things, fur ef a man be in pain, and he is waitin' fur us, the sooner we git to him the better."

"It is my brother," answered the girl, slipping into her warm, fur-lined jacket, and tying her hood closely under her chin, while the old Trapper shoved his feet into the moccasins, and reached for the foxskin cap over the doorway. "It's my brother," she repeated, "who is sickly, and has come into the woods because his physician had given him up, and said he must die; and my brother said he wouldn't die, and I said so too. And the physician said perhaps he wouldn't if he could get into the woods. And so we started for your cabin, for we had heard of you, John Norton. My brother knows the man whose brother you saved in the rapids last year, and he told us to come straight to your cabin, and you would care for us. And so we left our city home, as I said, and started for this spot. A countryman brought us in from the edge of the woods till we struck the borders of the lake, just after the sun had set; and he wouldn't go another step, for he said the ice was uncertain, and he didn't know the breathing-holes. And he proposed to camp till morning and then come on; but my brother was impatient to be here, for you see he was excited in being so near to you, of whom he had read and heard so much. And he said he would walk if I would, and so we took the direction from the teamster, who said we would see the light of your cabin after we had passed the second island; and sure enough we did. And we got on

famously, and were almost here, when my brother slipped and fell, and sprained his ankle so he could not walk. But I could see the light shining bright through your little window; and I hurried on, and came running to your door, and — you know the rest."

It had all been told in far less time than it takes to write it; for the girl spoke hurriedly in her excitement, and didn't waste a word.

"Ye be a brave girl, Magnet," said the Trapper, "and ye have acted with jedgment. Stay where ye be, friend," said he, speaking to The Man Who had Missed It, "onless ye feel like h'istin' two or three more logs onto the fire. And say," continued the Trapper, with his hand on the latch, "put over the kittle and git the water bilin'. The boy will need a warmin' drink when he comes. No, no, Magnet, ye mustn't walk, yer feet have been far enough to-night. Git onto the sled." And the old man pulled a sled from the corner of the building, against which it was standing, and threw a bearskin over it in such a way that it would answer for a cushion and a covering both. "Git onto the sled and tuck yerself in, and I'll give ye a ride sech as ye can't have in the settlements, ef yer horse hasn't but two legs. No, no," said the old man, laughing to himself as he started on, "ye needn't tell me the direction, fur I've got the line of the trail, and it isn't often that I follow so small a track, either." And the old man, laughing to himself, started on a dog-trot up the lake; for the snow on the ice was light, and offered little impediment.

They had gone half a mile, perhaps, when the Trapper turned his face backward to the sled, and said, —

"Well, Magnet, are ye a good jedge of distance?"

"I think you have gone half way," said the girl in a clear, hopeful voice, "for it's a little this side of the island where he slipped."

"Good enough," said the Trapper; "ye've got a jedgmatical eye fur sartin, and as it isn't likely to wake any neighbors, I'll send a sound down towards yer brother that' ll let him know we ain't a thousand miles off." And the old Trapper came to a stop for a single step, and sent a call from his mouth into the frosty air, the echoes of which, passing on from bluff to bluff, must have gone nearly to the inlet.

The girl laughed pleasantly at the energy of the sound.

"S-h!" said the Trapper.

An answering halloa came across the surface of the snow. A brave and cheerful sound it was, full of gladsome courage, although by no means strong; as if the spirit rather than the mouth sent it forth.

"That is Tom," said the girl. "Dear old fellow! I'm afraid he thinks I have been gone a long time."

"He's a good un," said the Trapper, "ef a man can be jedged by the sound of his voice; fur his call had hope in it, and a kind of cheerful sartinty that a coward couldn't send forth."

"Tom is no coward," said the girl. "He would have died long ago if he hadn't been determined not

to. You don't think he will die up here, do you, John Norton?" and the girl put the question plaintively.

"Die?" ejaculated the Trapper. "Sartinly not. No one can die up here, onless the number of his days be run out by reason of his years; or his sperit be crushed by reason of his troubles. Die? No. No man can die with an appetite; and yer brother will be eatin' like Henry himself afore he has been in the cabin a week."

"Who is Henry?" asked the girl.

"Henry be mine," said the Trapper. "I had two — Henry and the Lad. The Lad be gone, but Henry be left. Ye'll know him some day, perhaps."

"I didn't know that you had children," said the girl.

"Not arter the flesh, Magnet, not arter the flesh; but arter the sperit, — and Henry and the Lad be mine arter the sperit."

While the dialogue had been going on the old Trapper had maintained his steady trot, and at a pace that ate up the distance of a mile rapidly.

"I see him!" said the Trapper in a moment. "He has crawled into the pint of the island, and is jest lightin' him a fire. Yer brother has his wits about him, that is sartin, and is actin' like a man of sense. But we'll give him a better fire than he'd make out here ef he burnt the island over. Here we are," said the Trapper in a moment, as he swung up to the point of the island. "Here we are, young man! and the cabin is not far away."

"Tom, dear Tom!" said the girl, as she jumped from the sled; and running up to the man seated on the shore, she flung both her arms around his neck, and kissed him.

"Dear Tom, here is John Norton!"

"Never mind the greetin', now," said the old man. "The air be bitin'; and the cabin be warm."

And putting his arms out, he lifted the young man upon the sled and wrapped him up warmly in the skin, and without another word he seized hold of the tongue of the sled and started toward the cabin.

The girl, with many questions to her brother touching his feelings, and with many a cheering word touching the warm fire ahead and the hearty greeting she had received from the Trapper, tramped along beside him. Thus the three, — the Trapper, happy in the thought of the deed he was doing; the young man who was determined not to die; and the girl whose love was equal to his courage, — passed rapidly on over the snow, and came to the Trapper's cabin.

CHAPTER VI.

THE Trapper flung open the door, and, lifting the young man bodily from the sled as if he had been but a child, carried him into the cabin and placed him down in the great arm-chair that stood in front of the fire, while his sister removed his cap, overcoat and wrappings, with a quickness and dexterity which only a woman brings to the performance of such homely ministries. It took but a few moments of time for the Trapper to examine the young man's ankle, which, when he had done, he proceeded to dress with its proper wrappings; for in his checkered and eventful life — on march, in battle, and in hospital — he had had no little practice in practical surgery.

"Ye sartinly had a pritty sudden slip; and ye've got a pritty bad strain in the ankle here," said the old Trapper as he was preparing to wind the bandage on to the extended limb; "and a strain in the ankle is eenamost as bad as a crick in the back. And either of 'em is enough to larn a man his mortality, as I conceit. It's sartinly strange how the givin'-out of some leetle jint, or cord, or bone in a man's body, will kink him up as much as it does."

"The old hymn says," said the girl, speaking in a bright, cheerful tone, —

> "Strange that a harp of a thousand strings
> Should keep in tune so long."

"That's a goodly number of strings," said the Trapper, answering her bright look with a face that broadened and beamed in its good-nature; "that's a goodly number of strings, Magnet, fur an ordinary-sized instrerment to have. I was up in the fur country, nigh on to ten years ago, where the Injuns and half-breeds hunt fur the Company, — and I don't conceit that a meaner set of human bein's be on the 'arth; fur atween their thievin' and their drinkin' and their murderin' they keep an honest man pritty active. Ye see, I went up there to sorter see the country and have a good taste of trappin', as I used to know it; fur I'd heerd that fur was plenty in them parts, and the country not overcrowded. So I jest went up there, and, pickin' out a couple of good streams, I went to work in an honest sort of a way. I hadn't been there more than a week afore a half-dozen of the half-breeds, with two or three Frenchers, dropped into my cabin one night to warn me off. They was a pritty noisy set of chaps, and arter a good deal of blusterin' they said they'd give me jest two days to git out of the country."

"Did you go, John Norton?" asked the girl with her bright eyes fixed on the old Trapper's animated countenance, as he continued to wind on the bandage.

"Not exactly in the two days, Magnet," said the old Trapper, looking up with a gleam in his eye that chilled the humor of their expression; "I sorter argued with them fur a while. I told 'em that I'd come up to see the country and git acquainted with their way of

doin' things and have a sorter of a breathin' spell; that I didn't mean to do anything wrong or make any inimies. Ef they had any streams they specially liked, seein' as how they was natives, I'd stand aside and take some poorer ones. Ye see, Magnet, I talked sorter easy to 'em, for ef there was to be a fight, I wanted to be on the right side, and I conceit that a man who tries to git along without a fight is on the right side of it, ef he has to go into it arter all."

"I hope you didn't have to fight, did you, John Norton?" asked the girl.

"It got pritty near it," said the Trapper; "yis, it got pritty near it," repeated he, as he held up the coarse needle that he was trying to thread between the fire and his eye, "for I barnt considerable powder off and on afore I got rid of the critters. Ye see, they was sorter onreasonable, and they wouldn't listen to sense; and, arter I found they hadn't any jedgment, I left off talkin'."

"What did you do, John Norton," said the young man whose face showed that he was following the Trapper's experience with intense interest, "after you left off talking?"

"Well, ye see," answered the Trapper, "they was onreasonable, and there wasn't but one thing to do, — I sartinly think this needle hasn't got an eye to it. I wish I could git a needle that a man could git a decent-sized string through in less than a half an hour's punchin', — there wasn't but one thing to do," continued the Trapper, having at last, by the sheerest luck,

found the eye of the needle: "ye see, they got to talkin' louder and louder, and then they went to sorter handlin' their knives and edgin' round me, till I conceited the thing had gone about fur enough, and so I reached fur my rifle, loosened my knife a trifle, and spoke to the pups, who sartinly seemed to understand their lingo, fur their bristles was up and their teeth lookin' sassy. So I jest reached fur the rifle and spoke to the pups, and we eddicated them half-breeds fur about five minits, and gin them our idees of the matter."

"I shouldn't have thought," said the young man, "that you could have held your own against them all."

"There was considerable doubt who owned the cabin for a minit or two," answered the Trapper, "fur though there wasn't any of them very big sized, yit they belonged to a nimble breed; and a nimble fellow in a scrimmage is a man ye have to look out fur; but the pups was a good deal of help, fur they didn't like the smell of the critters from the fust, and they showed considerable arnestness; and I had got rather riled myself in the talkin', fur they was mighty sassy, I can tell ye. And so when I let loose on 'em, I did it with the feelin' of a man who has got wusted in the talkin', and had got to make it up in the doin'. Yis, it was a lively time for sartin," said the Trapper, laughing to himself, "fur though I didn't barn any powder, — fur ye see, Magnet, I didn't want to do any violence, I only wanted to sorter eddicate 'em a leetle and give 'em the main pints of the case, as I understood the rights of the matter, — I did use the rifle stock a leetle loose, and when that

broke, I reasoned with 'em with a small bench there was in the cabin till the cabin got too small to hold anything more than the bench and the pups; for a bench can fill up a good deal of room ef ye handle it a leetle loosely and ain't too particular what it hits."

"Did they let you alone after that?" asked the young man.

"No, they didn't," said the Trapper; "they pestered me all they could; but I stood my own fur nigh on to a month, and they hadn't been playin' their devilments on me more'n a week afore it got to be a good deal like the old-fashioned times; and the man that could send lead straightest and git to cover quickest, had the best of it. I stood my own as long as I conceited it was safe, and then I gathered up my traps and took the back trail, fur the whole country was actally swarmin'; and they follered me nigh on to fifty mile, and we had a good deal of dodgin' and shootin' along the way. But I got out of it alive, and I brought back one whole skin anyway, and that's more than a dozen or more of 'em could say."

"I don't see why you should run such risks, John Norton," said the girl, "merely for the sake of a few skins."

"Resk!" answered the Trapper; "there wasn't any special resk, as I know on, for there wasn't any of their tricks that I hadn't seen afore; and I could tell jest about what the sneakin' critters would do. Ef I had only had Henry with me, and the Lad, and the boy had liked the fun, we would have stayed, and trapped

the season through, and we'd picked our streams, too. For with one good rifle in the cabin and two trusty pieces on the trail, there aint half-breeds enough in the north country to drive 'em out ef they've made up their minds to stay. There," said he, as he finished sewing the bandage and stuck the needle into the lapel of his coat, "there, young man, ye needn't worry about yer ankle; the pain is about out of it now, and ye'll be usin' it as well as the other in a day or two. And now," said he, rising to his feet, "what shall I call ye, young man? And what can I do fur ye?"

"You are to call him Tom," said the girl, "and you are to call me Magnet. We've got other names, of course, by which we are known in the city; but we've come up here to be children — Tom to get well, and I to help him get well. So call him Tom and call me Magnet; won't that do?" and the girl looked brightly up into the old Trapper's face.

"Sartinly, sartinly," said the old Trapper, laughing; "one name is as good as another ef the man that owns it is contented with it. Ef ye want to be children, ye shall be children, and I'll call ye by the names ye have said."

"But you asked us what you could do for us, John Norton," she replied.

"Sartinly, Magnet; that's what I said," responded the Trapper.

"We want you to build a house for us," said the girl, — "a little log house just like this, right beside yours here somewhere, and we've brought everything

in to furnish it. It's all down on the load with the teamster — bedding and chairs and provisions, and everything we need; and if you will only build us a house right here by yours, and let us live with you till Tom gets well, I shall be the happiest girl in the world. Will you do it, John Norton?"

"Sartinly, Magnet, sartinly. I've built a great many housen, as ye call' em, in my day with nothin' but an axe; and I can throw ye up a cabin in a couple of days, and a snug un, too. Ye can live as comfortable in it as a squirrel in his hole."

"But we want to board with you, John Norton," continued the girl; "we want to come over to eat at your table and stay with you all the time when we are not asleep. May we do it?"

"Of course ye may," said the Trapper; "and ye shall have enough to eat, for venison is plenty and fat this winter."

The girl stooped and whispered to her brother for a moment, and then she looked up to the Trapper and, hesitating, said, —

"How much will you let us pay you a week for our board, John Norton?"

"I don't understand ye," said the Trapper; and he looked from the face of the girl to the brother, and then from the brother's face to hers, and again he said, "I don't understand ye."

A fine color came into the girl's face. She looked at her brother and hesitated a moment as if studying for the best possible way to say what, woman-like, she

was determined to say, and then, dashing at it with the charming frankness that became her so well, she burst out: —

"We are not poor, John Norton, we are rich. We have all the money we want, and more too, and we don't want to be beggars; we want to pay you for all your trouble; and we shall be a great trouble to you: so do tell us what we shall pay you."

"Magnet," said the Trapper, "I know leetle of what ye call money, and I need leetle; fur the wants of a man who lives accordin' to natur' are few and his needs be easily met. Ye and yer brother have come to my cabin, and ye are welcome to stay; and all that's mine ye are welcome to. And as fur yer money, I have no need of it, and so that is settled. And as ye have told me yer names, I will tell ye the names of them that be here The dog on yer right, Magnet, is Sport; the one on yer left is Rover, and they be well bred. Ye'll find both companionable arter their kind. Ye'll find Rover a leetle slow and not given to play, fur the dog is ageing, and years makes man and dog alike grave and steady. And now that ye know the pups, I will introduce ye to my friend Children," said the old man, turning toward his guest, who came forward from the corner of the room in which he had been silently sitting, "children, this is a man who came in trouble to my door, and I made him welcome. He has had his griefs and his sorrers, and he calls himself 'The Man Who has Missed It,' and I don't gainsay his name; but I call him 'Friend,' for that is the

shorter name, and as between him and me it answers the parpose of our companionship. The dog ye see by his side he calls, 'Lucky.' I don't conceit the reason of the name; but that doesn't matter. The dog is a knowin' dog, and Lucky is his name. And now that we know each other," said the Trapper, as if slightly relieved that the introduction was over, "now, friend and children, sence we all know each other, we can all feel that we are at home," and so saying, the old Trapper seated himself as did the others around the great fire that roared and crackled and flamed its flashes and spangles of light in vagrant gleams into the otherwise dark recesses and corners of the great room.

So the four were sitting on Christmas Eve in the cabin in the wilderness. In the cities chimes were being tuned in preparation for joyous Christmas morn. Parents were busy in those secret ministries of love which make happy the hearts of the children. And children themselves were sleeping, dreaming happily of the morrow, save here and there a child, perhaps, that had no parent, had no love to make ready gifts, had no happy Christmas morrow, and into whose uneasy slumber would come that night no bright vision of gift and happy festival.

"Children," said the Trapper after a few moments of silence, "my friend here was tellin' the story of his life afore ye come in, Magnet, and though I have knowed a good many folks that had their struggles, and I have had some disappintments myself off and on, — leetle setbacks sech as a man is likely to git in a

scrimmage or a square stand-up fight, where a good deal of powder is barnt and the knife and the rifle-stock is used careless like, — yit I never knowed a man in all my life that has had anywhere near as much up-hill work, from the beginnin', as my friend has, accordin' to his tellin'. Fur ye see, children, to start with, his mother and father was lost at sea, when he was a leetle babe, and all on board the ship was lost with 'em; and he — leetle babe as he was — was the only bein' saved. I've read in the Scriptur' that the Lord notes the leetle sparrers, and sorter keeps an eye on the foxes, though I don't see exactly the necessity of that; fur a fox be a cunnin' critter, and I never knowed an old mother-fox that couldn't take care of herself, and her kittens too, ef there was an average run of rabbits, and partridge was ordinarily thick. Still, I don't doubt what the Scriptur' says, ye understand; and I suppose that the eyes of the Lord be sighted to see everything; and so he couldn't overlook, ef he wanted to, the foxes."

"I suppose," said Magnet, "that in the sentence you have quoted, the Saviour was comparing his poverty with the birds and the foxes, and meant to suggest that while the birds had their nests for a home and the foxes had their holes, he had no home on the earth."

The old man deliberated a moment as if the girl had suggested a new idea to him, and then continued: —

"It may be as ye say, Magnet. It sartinly looks sorter reasonable as ye think of it; but there is difficulties in accountin' fur it onless the camps in his country

was a good way apart, or the people onnaterally stingy, fur he couldn't have struck any region here in the woods and fetched a trail through fifty mile and not found a man to take him in and gin him a good welcome; and a cabin, ef the jints of the loggin' be well made and it is well placed as to wood and water, and the game is anyway plenty, isn't a bad place to live in, specially ef a man happens to be without a home. But it may be as ye say, Magnet, only they must have been a mighty mean set, take them as they run, when the Lord was on the arth."

"They were, John Norton," said the girl. "They were hard-hearted and cruel, and they hated him because he was good, and he came to make them better."

"I heerd the missioners say that that was the real gist of the matter," answered the Trapper; "but they didn't put it as well as ye have, Magnet; fur they made a good many words about it, and sort of mixed things up so that me and the pups had to do a good deal of councillin' arterwards to make out jest what they meant; but ef he hadn't any home," continued the Trapper, looking toward his friend, "he wasn't any wuss off than my friend here, fur the only home he had was the poorhouse, and it wasn't a very comfortable spot either for a mortal to enjoy himself in, as he picturs it. And then the wust of it was, ye see, he didn't know his name, for his mother and father was drowned when he was a leetle babe; and a man without any name is as bad off as a dog without any name,

— nobody knows who he is, and he don't know who he is himself; and my friend here didn't know who he was; and, as he says, he hadn't mother nor father, nor country nor home, nor friend nor name, and that's a count that brings a man to the last skin in the pack, as I conceit."

"But certainly," said the girl, casting a pitying look toward the Man Who had Missed It, who was gazing with a sober expression into the fire, but who, in answer to her look, lifted his eyes to her face as one who would take of the beauty and goodness of it as they who are hungry take food, "certainly, he found friends at last."

"Yis," said the Trapper, "he did, and good friends, too, that took him from the poorhouse and gave him a home with them."

"How many were there in the family?" asked the girl, and she looked not at the Trapper, but at The Man Who had Missed It.

"There were three," answered the man: "the father my benefactor — and he spoke the word with the falling inflection of reverence — his wife, and one child — a daughter."

"Now," said the Trapper, "ye've got nigh to the pint we was at when yer comin' broke us off, — leastwise, pretty near it. Ye see, my friend, who was a boy then, growed up with the girl, and as was nateral, they growed to love each other. The weddin' day was set, and they were actally in front of the minister who was to marry 'em, and somethin' happened."

"What happened then?" asked the girl eagerly, and she and her brother both turned their faces quickly toward The Man Who had Missed It.

The Man Who had Missed It, again lifted his face to the girl's, and said in a calm, steady, but infinitely sad tone, —

"My bride fell dead at the altar."

The faces of the two young people were a study to see. How full of finest ministry to the sorrow of this world is the expression which the faces of the sympathetic can give us in our trouble! The girl rose quietly from her chair, moved to the side of The Man Who had Missed It, and lifting one of his hands held it for a moment in both her own, and then she laid it down on the arm of the chair, and quietly reseated herself.

The dog, Lucky, came round in front of the girl, moved up to her side, and lifting his muzzle gently caressed her hand resting on the arm of her chair.

"The dog's a knowin' dog," said the Trapper, nodding to the brother; "there isn't much goin' on in this cabin that he don't see. I'm a leetle onsartin about the cross, but he's got good breedin' in him somewhere, ef it is a good deal mixed."

"Now, friend," said the Trapper, "ef ye feel like it, and the children don't feel sleepy, I would like to have ye take up the trail of yer story where Magnet's comin' crossed it, and carry it on a leetle, and I sartinly hope there didn't anything else happen of evil after yer bride was taken away from ye; for ef there did, it

sartinly looks as ef the Lord had overlooked ye in the appintments of his marcy with which he tempers the lot of the weak and the unfortinit, and levels the ups and downs of life to some sort of a respectable average."

"John Norton," answered the man, "my bride had scarcely been buried before another calamity almost as great as her death befell me."

"Friend," said the Trapper, "ef I didn't know ye was a truthful man, I should sartinly doubt the story ye be tellin' me; fur of all the men I have ever seed that had woes on the arth, — and my eyes have seed human trouble enough to make me at times doubt ef the Lord is mindful of his creeturs, — I never seed a man that had gained so leetle and missed so much as yerself. And now, friend, be careful of yer words, and make nothin' larger than it was; but tell me plainly what of evil happened to ye next?"

The man looked into the face of the Trapper with clear and steady gaze, and then, as if he would pick the fewest possible words to describe the greatest possible grief, he said, —

"My benefactor died!"

CHAPTER VII.

For a full moment no one spoke. The three looked at The Man Who had Missed It, with eyes which expressed the sympathy of their hearts, but no word escaped them. Indeed, they knew not what to say. The death of his benefactor, following so swiftly as it did the death of his bride, put such a climax to precedent misfortunes, that the hearers felt themselves unable to express, in words, an adequate sense of his overwhelming loss. For several minutes the silence continued, when The Man Who had Missed It, interrupted it by resuming his narrative: —

"Yes, my benefactor died; — died as suddenly as his daughter had died before him. He was standing by my side in the laboratory, conducting with me a system of experiments. He was stating a proposition, and looking directly in my face, when a change, swift as a flash, came to his countenance. The very word he was speaking halted in his throat. He threw his hands into the air and dropped, without a moan or a struggle, dead at my feet. The double misfortune literally broke the heart of the mother and the wife; and she, too, died that night, and we buried them both at the same time, one coffin on either side of my bride's coffin, — three coffins in one grave, John Norton. And when the mound was rounded over the three, I stood

beside it, once more without a home and without a friend. All that I had won I had lost; all I had hoped for I had suddenly missed."

"No, you had not lost all," said the girl, and her face brightened, "you had not lost all; for you had your mind and your learning left. And all the wisdom and cunning that learning had brought to your natural abilities were with you. Were they not, John Norton?" and the girl flashed a glance into the old man's face.

"Sartinly, sartinly, Magnet!" responded the Trapper; "knowledge be a thing ye can't take from a man, nor a hound, onless ye kill him. And a man with larnin' can do eenamost anything ef he has the right sperit within him."

"I admit the force of what you say," said the man. "It is true that no calamity which leaves the reason untouched and the spirit unsubdued can rob man of the powers and pleasures of intelligence. And this thought it was which strengthened me in my affliction. And when I left the neighborhood, where I had spent so many happy years, I carried with me a great grief, indeed, but with it also a great hope. And I faced the uncertainties of the future with a spirit braced to overcome its obstacles, and to remove whatever impediment there might be in my path."

"Ye was wise in that," said the Trapper. "I've been in some tight places myself, off and on, in my life; but I was never in a place yit that I didn't git out of, and in pritty good shape, too, considerin' all the sarcum-

stances. I don't doubt but what ye got along pritty well, friend, arter ye got to work; and ef ye don't mind tellin' us, I would like to know what trail ye struck arter ye left the three graves."

"I have told you," said the man, "that I was by nature ingenious. I was born with the faculty of invention. With my benefactor I had been a student of Nature. With him I had discovered many of the forces which are in the earth and the air. I discovered the law which governs the movement of storms. I made myself acquainted with the scientists of the age. I showed them my data. I unfolded the principle. In my enthusiasm I gave them all the facts which years of patient investigation had brought to my knowledge. I did it in the enthusiasm born of my success. I had no doubt of my reward."

"You got your reward?" said the girl interrogatively.

"I got no reward," said the man; "the men in whom I confided betrayed me. They were rich. They were titled. They were men known throughout the world. They examined my data. They took from me all the knowledge with which I was possessed. They mastered the pinciples that by years of patient investigation I had discovered, and then" —

"What did they do then?" said the girl.

"They published them as their own discoveries," said the man, "they stole my knowledge, and gave me no credit. They appropriated the honor that belonged to me. They never even gave me an honorable

mention in their reports." He said this with a vibration of bitterness in his voice; with the emphasis of a man who feels that he has been greatly wronged, and yet with the sadness, too, of one who feels that the wrong will never be righted, and that the injury done him is irreparable.

"They were vagabonds," said the Trapper; "yis, they were nateral thieves. They was no better than the half-breeds that steal the skins from another man's trap, though his name be cut into the iron as plain as a file can do it. I trust ye ambushed them in their thievin', friend, and squared accounts with 'em afore ye took up the line and left the country."

"John Norton," responded the man, "it is little that a poor man can do against a rich man; or that a lowly one can do against them that are in high places. It was a theft that I could not indict at the law. The property they stole from me was not that of money and lands, but of honor, of reputation, and of credit for having served the age and advanced it in intelligence and power. If I applied for membership to their society, they would not admit me. If I called at their studies, I could get no audience. I went to the editors of the great journals, and they looked upon me as crazy. I was poor, and they who had stolen my knowledge were rich. I was unknown, and they were honored. I was alone, and they were a part of a system. What could I do, — one against the many?"

"They had the best on ye, fur sartin," said the Trapper. "Yis, the sneaks had the best on ye; but I'd

have warmed 'em in some way, ef I had been in yer place, afore I was done with the rogues."

"It was not a case, John Norton, in which physical force or human courage could win the fight. I had ascertained scientific facts of the utmost import. But they had been stolen from me by those whom the people honored, and why should the people believe a man without money, without title, without friends, when over against him are the honored and the great? But it makes little difference," said the man sadly. "I shall get my reward by and by, perhaps."

"Friend," said the Trapper, "the Scriptur' says that the Lord will appint a day in which the vagabonds and them that have done evil on the arth will git a gineral overhaulin'; and the idee is sartinly a reasonable one. Now, when that day comes, don't ye fail, friend, to be on hand, and do ye put in yer case as strongly as ye can when the matter of their cheatin' comes up. Ye'll find me somewhere in the crowd, for I've got one or two things that will have to be attended to myself: not matters of any great weight, fur I have ginerally kept the account pretty well squared as I went along; but there is a sneak of a half-breed up on the Canada Line, nigh the head waters of the St. Regis, that's got two good pelts that belong to me, ef there is any ownership in trappin'; and his case will sartinly come up in the Jedgment, onless I can manage to git time to take a journey to the north eend of the woods once more. And ef I do, the Lord needn't pay any special attention to him, for I know the pints of the case, and I have a pritty

good idee of sech matters. And ef I can git up to the Canada Line, and the vagabond hasn't moved out of the country, I'll settle the matter in a jedicious manner. But I sartinly advise ye to be on hand at the Jedgment, and make them rogues give back what they stole from ye. And ef ye git into a little discussion over the matter, and ye want any help, — ye see, ye bein' one and they bein' several,— ef they should git noisy, "ye might want a leetle help," — and the old man moved his chair a trifle towards his guest in the simple earnestness of his confidential tender of assistance.

"I don't see," said the girl, "what good a scientific reputation will do one in heaven."

"Hoot!" said the Trapper; "Magnet, ye don't understand these things. A man's reputation is his reputation, wherever he be, as I conceit; and it goes with him as the skin goes with the duck, whether he dives or flies. Friend, don't ye mind what the girl says, fur she be a girl; but ye jest stand up fur yer rights; and ef ye want any help, as I was sayin', any man to swear ye are right in yer charges, or to put in a few licks arter the vardict is given." —

"But, John Norton," said the girl, interrupting him, "you don't suppose that we are going to have bodies in heaven, do you?"

"Bodies! of course I do," said the Trapper. "Lord, Magnet! how is a man goin' to git along without a body? Why, we couldn't see each other ef we hadn't bodies."

"But, John Norton," said the girl, again in her ear-

nestness interrupting him, "if we do have bodies, they won't be at all like these, but a great deal better."

"Better!" returned the Trapper; "there can't be a better body, Magnet, than this un. Why, I've lived nigh on to eighty year, and I never knowed a pain in my life, nor an ache, save sech as a man gits in a scrimmage or in battle, or sech as he has in his stomach when meat is scarce and he is onnaterally hungry. Ye see, I know what I'm talkin' about, Magnet. A man who talks from an experience of eighty year isn't guessin' at the thing. No, no, the Lord can't make a better body than he gin me at birth; leastwise, I'll be parfectly contented ef he'll give me another as good as this has been, and keep it runnin' forever."

The man had listened, apparently, with a good deal of interest to the conversation, for the girl's animation and the old Trapper's earnestness were amusing; but when the Trapper had closed with the sententious opinion touching the perfection of the mortal body, The Man Who had Missed It, joined in the conversation, or, rather, continued his narrative: —

"I was a good deal cast down," he said, "for a time after I was cheated of the credit which belonged to me in the matter of which I was speaking; but though they could steal the results of past study, they could not steal the investigating quality of my mind. Knowledge remained with me, and out of the knowledge I had gained sprang other knowledge, and the line of my previous study led me to another and more important discovery."

"What was it?" said Tom, speaking for the first time, but who had listened as one greatly interested. "What was your next discovery?"

"I had discovered the laws which govern the movement of storms; I next discovered the *cause of storms itself.*"

"I beg you to explain it," said the young man. "I have been something of a natural student myself, and the physical sciences have been my delight."

"I am glad to meet you, sir," said the man, speaking with animation. "I am glad to meet one who can enter sympathetically into the labors of my life, and who can appreciate, therefore, the losses I have met;" and the man turned his chair until he sat facing the young man, and addressed his explanation directly to him.

"I discovered, as I have told you, the movement of storms. I found that it was rotary, and that they moved with various degrees of rapidity. I knew that if I could command telegraphic communication, the approach of a storm might be known days before it would come; and the commerce of the country could be governed self-protectingly by the knowledge. And it took me years of patient examination before the cause of storms was revealed to me; but at last I found it."

"What did you find it to be?" asked the young man.

"I will explain it to you," responded the man. "It is this: the origin of all storms is found in heat. Heat comes from the sun and the planets. When these sources of heat are brought in conjunction above any

special area of the earth's surface, that area is subject to unusual heat; the atmosphere resting above that area becomes exceptionally rarified and rises upward. This makes an atmospheric vacuum, and a rapid movement of air occurs, — the outward atmosphere rushing tumultuously in towards the centre of the vacuum; — thus storms, tempests, and tornadoes are caused.

"Granted, therefore," continued the man, speaking with great rapidity and earnestness, "a certain planetary conjunction above a certain area of territory, at a certain time, and at that time within that area of territory, a storm, of greater or less violence according to the degree of the heat thus localized, is sure to occur. Do you follow my explanation?"

"I do," said the young man, speaking with animation; "I follow it perfectly; and it is not only novel, but it is startling. If storms orginate in heat, and the heat orginates in planetary conjunction, and the planetary movements which result in the conjunction are astronomically known, why," and the young man hesitated a moment, while his eyes fairly shone with the intensity of thought which had flashed upon him, "why cannot storms be predicted as certainly as an eclipse?"

"They can be," said the Man Who had Missed It. "I can predict *a storm a thousand years before it will come.*"

"Friends," said the Trapper, "suppose ye fetch up a minit at that pint. Ye are pushin' the trail a leetle too fast to make all the blazes plain, leastwise,

on both sides of the tree. And ef ye ain't keerful, ye'll git furder into the swamp than ye'll find yer way out of without a good deal of hollerin'. Now, Magnet and me have been payin' pritty close attention to what ye have been sayin', and it may be that storms do go whirlin' round; fur I've seed the leetle wind-puffs spin themselves acrost the lake, and ye can't live in the woods a month in the fall and not see the winds play their whirligigs with the leaves. And ef it's true with the leetle puffs, I conceit it may be true with the big uns. And it may be that storms do move in the way ye say, — though, arter my way of thinkin', they can't be relied on to move any way in particular, fur storms have their notions and be a good deal like a woman with too many idees in her head and a leetle over-arnest in her feelin's, — ye can't always tell which way ye'll find her.

"I ax yer pardin, Magnet," said the old Trapper, speaking to the girl, who had interrupted him with a clear peal of laughter. "I ax yer pardin', Magnet, ef what I've said about the onsartinty of wimmin's ways seem onkind to ye; but I've watched 'em a good deal off and on in my guidin' and in my trips to the settlements, and I've come to the opinion that wimmin be a good deal onsartin. Ye can't prophesy over night how they are goin' to feel next day. Not that I conceit that that's anything agin 'em, Magnet, fur the prittiest things in natur' be the things that change oftenest; and there's nothing prittier than to see a woman change her mind over night, 'specially ef she

was on the wrong side of the question when she went to bed. But, friend, as to yer prophesyin' about the comin' of a storm a year or two afore it comes," —

"I said a thousand years, John Norton. I can predict the coming of a storm a thousand years before it comes."

"A thousand year!" exclaimed the Trapper. "That's eenamost as long as etarnity. Yis, yis," said the Trapper, while an inexpressibly quizzical look came into his countenance, "I dare say ye can *prophesy* it; but I don't conceit the storm will come any more fur yer prophesyin'."

"Did you ever see an eclipse, John Norton?" asked the man.

"Sartin," responded the Trapper; "there was one year afore the last. Me and the boys was campin' on the Raquette that summer, and a big un it was too. For the sun was blackened at noon-day, and the stars came out eight hours afore they oughter; and the arth looked as ef it had gone to a funeral, and everything was dreadfully solemn. I didn't mind much about it, for I'd seed the same thing afore, and I be a Christian man; and I knowed the Lord wouldn't wind things up in sech a sudden way; but there was a half-breed in the camp that conceited that the eend of the world had come; and as I knowed he hadn't lived as he ought ter have lived, I didn't discourage the idee; but sorter helped it on a leetle with some jedicious talkin' that pinted in that direction; fur I conceited that a good scare might make him a leetle more honest: and I suspected he'd handled one or two of my traps a

leetle loosely the fall afore, and might do it agin ef he wasn't edicated out of his thievin' notions. So I called the boys around me and whistled up the pups, who was a good deal skeered themselves, and jest told the boys that we'd better throw the powder into the lake, for the fire would bust out pritty soon, and everything would be blazin'. And then I told the pups they'd better take to the water afore they got singed; — ye see, the boys took the hint of the thing, and Henry helped me out a good deal. Fur he said that there wasn't much use to move the horns or the pups, for the flames wouldn't come leetle by leetle, but that the island would be blowed up a thousand feet into the air all at once; but that the good would be carried away by the angels. But ef a man had been a thief and had stolen anything; ef it wasn't anything more than an empty horn or a muskrat-skin, the angels wouldn't tech him with their leetle finger; but he'd have to stay and take it, onless he owned up — and the boy put a good deal of arnestness into the words 'owned up;'" and the old man, thoroughly tickled at the memory of the ruse that they had played on the half-breed, stopped in his narration and laughed with a heartiness that watered his eyes. It was one of those exhibitions of laughter that is contagious; and even The Man Who had Missed It, moved by the hilarity of it, joined with the two younger people in the explosions that followed.

"What effect did it have on the half-breed?" asked the girl, when the laughter had partially subsided.

"Well, ye see," said the Trapper, wiping his eyes with the sleeve of his coat, "the vagabond was ignorant and wicked both; and he sartinly thought the jedgment had come, and he owned up to a string of pilferin' a good deal wuss than I had suspected him of; fur to start with he had taken six minkskins from me. I axed him ef he hadn't forgot one or two, but he swore that the six was every blessed one he'd taken.

"Then he'd pilfered a sack of salt from a trapper on Deadwood and a box of sugar from a party on Little Wolf; but I told him I didn't think the Lord would make any special count of the sugar, onless it was better than most of the pedlers brought in from the settlements. But Henry said it was jest as bad to steal sand as it was to steal sugar; and as it helped the man towards righteousness, I didn't gainsay it at the time, but I argered the pint with Henry arterwards; and I made him own up that it wasn't reasonable to hold even a vagabond to quite as close a reckonin' for sand as it was for raal, fust-class sugar."

"What effect did it have on him the next day?" asked The Man Who had Missed It.

"Jest about as much effect," answered the Trapper, "as your prophesyin' a storm a thousand year ahead would have on the storm, as I conceit; fur natur' has her ways, and ye can't prophesy her into doin' as ye want her to. And ye can't frighten a half-breed into honesty, for, arter the darkness had gone, the vagabond was as chipper and chirp as I'd ever seed him; and I lost more skins the next fall on the line that led past

his clearin' than I had ever lost afore on any one line in my life. For though a scare will make a thief shake for a minit, yit it can't make an honest man of him; and when the fright is over, ef he was a thief at the start, he'll be a thief still."

CHAPTER VIII.

No one disputed the Trapper's conclusion; and after a moment of respectful waiting, as if to make sure that the Trapper had completed his remarks, The Man Who had Missed It, again resumed his narration. But the animation with which he had told his discovery had faded away. The light had left his eyes, and a sober expression possessed them. The play of features had departed, and his countenance had settled into sadness. His face, as revealed by the firelight, was one to command the respect of the gazer; for it suggested the refinement of thought and of scholarly habits; and at the same time it appealed to one's sense of pity, because over it disappointment, like a cloud, had thrown its sombre shadow.

The three who sat gazing at him felt that in him they beheld a person who had been the sport of a fickle and cruel fortune, — felt that his lot was inscrutable; and that in the wreck of his body and in the permanent hopelessness in which his spirit was plunged, and perhaps in which it rested, they saw the most pitiable of failures — a failure for which the man himself was not responsible; for by no fault of his did it come, and by no virtue of his, however exerted, could he have been delivered from it.

"It is needless for me," said the man at length,

"to narrate the countless disappointments of my life. It is needless for me to say how many things I have attempted, or how many things I have achieved, so far as mortal power could achieve them, or how many times a power stronger than my own — a power outside of myself, — the power of wicked men, the power of circumstance, and the power of society, which I strove to serve, but which seemed banded against me, — has dashed the cup of success, when brimming full, from my lips. My discoveries have been appropriated by others. And I who was upheld through the long nights of study and the long days of effort, in which I robbed my body of food that I might have the means to buy the little materials for my experiments, by the hope that I might link my name with scholarly achievements and be remembered among the honored when I was gone, have lived to see the results of my toil and sacrifice appropriated by those who robbed me, and the honors which should have been mine given to other men.

"I have not only discovered laws and principles and forces of nature that were unknown, but I have made inventions of the greatest value to mankind, by which they have been better clothed and fed and ministered unto in that which makes life happy, — inventions that have been stolen from me by corporations that have built fortunes on the patents they secured from the results of my ingenuity; patents which should be in my name and not theirs, and whose income would have made me rank among the richest of the land. And here I am, after thirty years of ceaseless effort, and

fifty of life, broken in body, weakened in mind, hopeless in spirit, without friends, and without a home, — a beggar on your bounty, John Norton, with no companion in life, and no one to mourn me when I die but this dog." And the man looked into the face of the Trapper and placed his hand on Lucky's head, who stood with his forefeet on his master's knee, looking with his bright eyes into his countenance.

"Ye shouldn't feel in that way, friend," said the Trapper. "It is true we haven't consorted long together; but we understand each other pritty well, as I conceit; and though ye have some notions about storms and a few sech things that we can't exactly agree on, yit the trail we be both followin' lies in the same direction, and though I can't offer ye a home sech as they might in the settlements, yit the cabin is a good un, and while the jints of the loggin' hold together, and the shingles shed water overhead, ye be welcome to stay. And the Lord of marcy will sartinly see to it, friend, that we suffer fur no comfort, and that we come to the edge of the Great Clearin' in peace."

"You are a noble man, John Norton," answered his guest, "and I know that the welcome that you have given the homeless is sincere. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness Had the men with whom I have dealt possessed your spirit, I should not have been where I am or as I am; but what is ahead I know not. I feel that the trail, as you call it, is not a long one for me; and that should I accept your hospitality, my presence would not burden it long. I came

into the wilderness to die, and out of the wilderness I shall not go. For of cities and men I have seen enough."

"Ye're right there, friend," said the Trapper; "the settlements be sartinly no place for a sensible man to live. I've often argued the pint with Henry, and I raaly believe the boy in his heart agreed with me, though he would never confess it. He says the wilderness is the place to rest and the settlements the place to work. And he says a great many things about the good that a man can do in the settlements, and the happiness he can have; but the boy is young yit, and ye can't expect the young to be wise like their elders; and I feel sartin that he'll git round to my way of thinkin' afore he gits to be of my age. He has a nateral taste fur the woods, and few be the signs in the arth or the sky that the boy doesn't see; and ef ye have an eye to see the beauties of Natur', and an ear to hear her speech, and a heart to learn her lessons, ye can't find any happiness like the happiness which she will give ye, especially ef yer life be honest."

The Man Who had Missed It listened with the deference that was habitual to him, to the utterance of the Trapper. There was a look in his eyes as he gazed into the old man's face, noble and peaceful in its expression as it was, as if he longed to believe what he was hearing, in the hope that to his stormy life something of the peace and the happiness of which the old Trapper spoke might come.

"It may be as you say, John Norton," he answered at length: "it may be that if when I left the three

graves, I had come to the wilderness and made my companionship with Nature, educated my eye to apprehend her beauties, my ear to hear the wisdom of her speech, and opened my heart — bereaved as it was — to the consolation of her sweet peace, my life would have been happier. As I have looked at you and seen in yourself the result of the influences of which you tell, I have felt that though I might have found less, as men call finding, yet I should have missed less. Perhaps I should have been as useful, and beyond doubt I should have been happier; for the happiness that waits on toil is found in its reward; and the peace which follows aspiration is found in its fulfilment. As for reward, I have none; and certain it is that I shall die with all of my plans unfulfilled. But in the life beyond it may be I shall come to whatever reward I am worthy, and in happier circumstances be able to work out the fulfilment of my plans."

"You spoke," said Tom, suddenly joining the conversation, "of being cheated out of patents that belonged to you. I do not see how they could have cheated you of the fruits of your inventions if you had been on the lookout, and ordinarily shrewd."

"I do not think that I am ordinarily shrewd," said The Man Who had Missed It, "at least, in protecting myself from the schemes of cunning men. I have studied principles rather than men, and the application of principles. And when I had ascertained a new principle and given it practical application in some invention, I was so happy in the thought of what I had

done — the triumph I had achieved — the good it would do in the world — that I explained it to any one that would hear me; and whatever rich man told me he would help me introduce it to the public, I trusted the whole matter to him, not doubting he would deal honestly with me. I see now my foolishness," continued he, "but I am not sure I should do differently if the same things were to be done over again; for man's conduct is the result of his character; and I was born with gifts few have, and with deficiencies too, I rejoice in feeling, that few have also."

"The Bible says," said Magnet, "that 'except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;' and I think the childish confidence and simple honest trust that you have had in people, although they have betrayed it, is to your honor and not to your shame. And if through his trustfulness they have stolen from him his earthly riches, may it not be, John Norton, that our friend here has gained more than he has lost by the manner in which he has lived?" and the girl made her appeal to the old Trapper with a face that absolutely shone with the hopeful purity of her thought.

The old Trapper looked into her beautiful face for a moment with an expression on his countenance as if he wished he might agree with her, but was forbidden so to do by the shrewd native sense which was a part of his very constitution.

"It's pleasant to hear ye talk, Magnet," he responded in a moment, "for yer voice be sweet and yer heart

pure, but I don't conceit that yer idees be right. Now, I hold that the wilderness is pritty free from vagabonds, considerin' the number of folks that come in from the settlements every year; but it won't do fur a man to leave his traps outside the cabin in plain sight, or piled up on the banks of a stream, onless he keeps within range and doesn't mind the cost of a charge of powder now and then. I don't mean to say, Magnet, that I would actally shoot a man fur stealin' a trap, leastwise, ef it was his fust theft and the trap was an old un; but a leetle powder jediciously barnt, and a leetle lead sent nigh enough to start a button and ease the waistcoat a leetle, or sort of tickle the flesh, I have found calcerlated to help a man in his rights and give the vagabonds a healthy idee of law. Now, here's yer brother that has studied law and knows all its ins and outs, and the sarvices it was meant to do, as well as I know the ins and outs of the woods, and the sarvice that a hound owes to his master. And now I put it to yer brother, ef it wouldn't have been a good deal better ef our friend here had been more carcumspect in his dealin', and amid other diskiveries diskivered what was his rights, and stood up fur 'em through thick and thin, and tickled the scamps a leetle with his lead when they was sneakin' round his cabin, pilferin' his traps and rumagin' a leetle loosely among his pots and his kittles."

"I think so, decidedly," said the young man. "I think the law is made to protect the innocent and the trusting; those that are naturally weak, or too modest

and mild to defend themselves without the law's intervention. I think our friend here should have appealed to the law; and if he had, he would have found that the law was his friend, and that it would have protected him from the dishonest and the unjust."

"It takes money to go to law," said the man, "and those who cheated me were rich and I was poor."

"That's it, boy," said the Trapper, "that's it. Our friend has hit the nail square on the head and drove it clean through, and it don't take half an eye to see the hole either. It takes money to go to law. A Trapper I met last year down on Grass River told me he went to law two year afore; and a lively time he had of it fur sartin."

"What was the case?" said Tom.

"Why, ye see," answered the Trapper, "he'd been troubled two year by a sneakin' thief on one of the lines he had run out, and he kept losin' skins; and finally he ketched him stealin' a mink; ketched him in the very act, and he went down to the settlements and complained of him. Well, the sheriff he got the feller finally, arter a month's huntin', and then the trial was put off another month. Ye see, the jedge didn't know anything, and the thief had hired a smart lawyer who could twist the jedge right round his leetle finger."

"What was the result of the trial?" asked Tom.

"That's jest it," said the Trapper; "there wasn't any result, as ye call it. The man told me the thing was put off and put off and put off. Ye see, he had to go sixty odd mile every time the trial come on, and

every time it come on he had something to pay; and the man swore — and he looked like an honest man — that it cost him the arnin's of a year's trappin' afore he got through with it, and that arter all his fuss he never got any vardict anyway. The thing sorter fell through, nigh as I could git at it, and no one could tell exactly how. And when the man asked my idees about it, I told him I thought the thing might have been managed a good deal better than he managed it; that I'd had several sech cases myself; but had never had any actaal trouble in managin' 'em, fur I never saw a thief I couldn't ambush by the second week of his pilferin', and ef ye once git yer eye on a vagabond when he's actally handlin' the skins, and ye be within range, and yer sights be right, why," and the old man straightened himself up, took up a stick and began to poke the fire, "ye never have any special difficulty arter that."

"But," said Tom, laughing, "that may be a very efficacious way to deal with thieves up here in the woods; but it won't do down among us in the cities. Our friend couldn't have protected himself and his property as you could yourself and your property; for the ways of the woods, as you say, are different from the ways of the settlements. But he could have appealed to the law."

"But I had no money," said the man.

"It don't matter," replied Tom. "It don't matter whether you had money or not. If you had a good case there was money in it, and any lawyer would have

taken it up and pushed it through on a percentage; and many a lawyer, too, would have done it without a percentage; for there are noble men in the profession who will not stand by and see a poor man robbed of the results of his industry or his genius. I wish you had come to me with one of your cases, and, whether it was a thousand or a million that they had cheated you of, they should have paid you every cent of it, and you should have had not merely the honor of the invention, but the money that it earned also."

The Man Who had Missed It listened to the young man with the eagerness of a child. It was evident that he had never thought it possible that he, a poor man, without friends, without knowledge of the law, and, we may add, without knowledge of men, could be protected in his rights. He had evidently pursued his studies and multiplied his inventions as impelled thereto by the irrepressible activity of the powers that were within him, and had yielded to his losses and his disappointments as to things that were inevitable.

For a moment he had certainly yielded himself to the impression produced by the earnest confidence of the speaker, for his eyes lighted, his face brightened, and the change which hope brings when it takes the place of despair flushed his countenance. But in an instant the light faded from his eye, the animation deserted his face, and, with his old despondency and, we might add, with his old weakness too, he turned his face from the young man, and, gazing at his dog, said, —

"It is too late now. Even Lucky knows it's too late."

It was evident that the dog did not accept the judgment of the master, for he spun himself round like a top, frisked, trotted in front of Tom and gave a sharp, clear bark, and then he took a swift circle round the cabin, and as he swept back to his master's chair jumped with such impetuousness between the Trapper's feet and the corner of the fireplace that he knocked over the huge iron tongs, which fell rattling noisily on the hearthstone.

"Lord!" said the Trapper, laughing, "did ye ever see sech a dog as that? I'd give the best skin I've got to know fur sartin his cross. I tell ye, friend, the dog be wiser than ye in his hopefulness. Ef ye can give the boy any pints by which he can git a twist on the vagabonds, I'd sartinly give 'em. It may be ye'd git yer money yit; although what a man who's got a good cabin to live in, an honest companion and a dog like that, wants of money, I sartinly don't see."

"I wish I had money," said the man. "God only knows how I wish I had money! I would like to know how it makes one feel to have once all the money he wants; money enough so he could have a good house, and plenty to eat and drink without worrying where it would come from. Money to buy tools to work with, and chemicals to carry on experiments. Money to give to the poor and the homeless and those who don't know their parents and haven't friends, and no name save such as they picked up in the streets! Money to give

away with your right hand and your left, not letting the one know what the other gave! Money to leave behind you that would keep on giving bread to the poor, and homes to the homeless, and education to all who crave it when you yourself lie in the grave! None but God knows, old Trapper, how much I have longed for money, that I might do these things. How often have I thought I had it, and how many times have I been cheated of it!"

There was something so earnest, so intense, so nobly self-forgetful in this outburst that the three who heard it were profoundly impressed.

"Give the boy the pints! Give the boy the pints!" exclaimed the Trapper, in tones as earnest as if he was demanding the signs of the trail when the smoke of battle was round him and there was not a moment to be lost. "Yis, give the boy the pints, and see ef he don't git a clamp on them vagabonds that'll make 'em open their pusses as a fish does his mouth when ye have him by the gills. Lord! I'd eenamost go to the settlements myself ef the boy sent me word he'd got a good twist on 'em. How much do they owe ye, friend?"

"There is one corporation," answered the man, "that has stolen five of my patents. Three of them it has used for years; and on the strength of those three its whole business is builded. My royalty, had it been honestly paid, couldn't amount to much less than a million."

"Put it high enough," said the Trapper, "put it high enough. I aint sartin that I actally git the

measurement of yer figgers, but my advice is that ef there's a least chance of gittin' it out of 'em, that ye put the figgers high enough. And ef ye throwed on a few more at the eend, sort of loose like, I don't conceit it would be anything more than the scamps desarve. So my advice is that ye put it high enough."

"I think I have," said the man; "it may be I have put it twice too high, but I know the corporation is worth millions, and its huge fortune is built up on the basis of my patents."

"What have you to base your claim upon?" asked Tom, speaking with a lawyer's accurate coolness. "Have you any original papers — anything to prove that you invented the things patented? or any memoranda of contracts touching the use of the same?"

"I have the *fac-simile* of the original models," answered the man, "duly stamped with the date and sworn to, and my own hand drew the specifications; and the original patterns and the specifications are doubtless in the Patent Office at Washington. I have memorandas of contracts in their own handwriting; but no formal contract, and no attested signature."

"Of course," said Tom, speaking with deliberate precision, "I cannot pronounce upon so intricate a matter on the moment; but I do not hesitate to say, sir, that if what you have said can be proved in court, you have a good cause of action, and a case can be brought against the corporation with a fair prospect of

success. I will undertake your case, and I shall be greatly disappointed if you do not recover damages to the full extent of any claim that can be shown to a jury to be reasonable and just."

"Do you think so?" said the man, and his face flushed to the very temples; "do you think that I may yet live to have money to do the things I long to do? May I hope to yet live to enjoy the fruits of my labor, young man?"

"I know ye will!" said the Trapper, and he flourished the tongs he held in his hands in his earnestness. "Lord, friend, the scent is a hot un! The boy can run the race with a high nose, and ef he be made of the right stuff he'll drive the buck to water in an hour. What say ye, boy, can ye git the money?"

"I can't tell for certain," answered Tom, "as I have said; but I think our friend has a good case, if the facts be as he has explained; and if I was well I'd start for the city to-morrow, and I would bring the action at once."

"Easy, easy," said the Trapper; "we know where the game is, but ye mustn't start him till ye git the persition. Persition is everything in a hunt, and I dare say it's the same in law. As fur yer bein' well, ye can jest take that as settled. There's everything in feedin', and ye won't be here a week afore ye'll be eatin' like a Dutch parson. Ye needn't shake yer head, Magnet: I've seed a good many come into the woods thinner than yer brother and not half of his sperit; and ef he isn't fatter by forty pound afore the ice

breaks up in the rapids, I shall be mightily disappinted. I'll do the feedin' and the boy shall do the lawin', and atween us both, with the help of the Lord, ye shall have yer money, every cent of it; but I advise ye to put the figgers high enough."

CHAPTER IX.

WINTER had passed and spring had come. The warm South, like a fair enchantress, had sweetly forced her way into the rigid presence of the Ice-King, and persuaded him to move his throne to the far North, giving her possession of his present kingdom. This he had not done all at once, or without many an exhibition of bad temper. At first he swore by all his blasts that he would not move an inch, but would hold the earth and all the streams in biting bondage forever.

In his quick rage he even made a dash at her, and his icy breath blanched the roses in her cheek; and, frightened at his touch, she fled southward, until she flung herself, icy cold, into the warm Gulf Stream. From her fervid bath she rose, with all the color in her cheek and body glowing. Her beauty and courage returned with the warmth, and more ardent than before, floating up to the North, again and again she practised her sweet arts. At last her charms proved irresistible. The icy heart of Winter melted, and, yielding to the gentle but persistent pressure of her warm palms, he gradually, halting ever and anon as if reluctant, moved northward, and finally left his late realm to her sweet sovereignty.

Never did a kingdom welcome the coming of a queen with greater alacrity. The pines shook off their covering of snow and waved their branches in her honor. The lakes steamed with fog, under the cover of which the blue waves fought with the ice for liberty. They flung the crystal blocks against the rocky islands; slid the great cakes up the sandy beaches, and pushed the floating masses down toward the open mouth of the outlet which hungrily swallowed them.

The little streams swelled with importance, and rushed ambitiously downward, as if eager to join the battle waged amid the fog, between the lakes and the ice. The rivers chafed their bands asunder, and ran downward beneath the overhanging pines with rippling laughter.

The hills began to sing. First the partridge beat his roll-call. Then sounded the robin's flute. The hermit thrush surprised the air with its one note of miraculous purity; while, from the open waters of the lake, the loon, sarcastic even in its gladness, poured forth its weird and mocking call.

One morn a little spotted fawn stole timidly out from the dark balsam shadows, and stood a moment with its small hoofs buried deep in the bright sand; looked its wonder for an instant from its clear eyes out upon the great stretch of water, and then stole back, frightened at the level distance perhaps. The next morning it came again; listened to the rippling song that ran its thin sound around the curved shore; boldly lapped the water with its tongue, and then frisked bravely in

circles. Next morn a dozen of its kind chased each other in wildest happiness from end to end of the bright beach.

A few weeks, and the arbutus flower came out sweet as modesty's own self. Then the cold, gray maples, the hard, wiry-looking birches, and the leaden hued beeches, took to themselves a new expression. Their hard look softened; their rigid stiffness limbered to suavity; they seemed to thicken in the air. Their branches became more pendent; and one morning — a morning without a cloud — the sun came up flushed with determination ; and to his ardor the trees yielded and welcomed him, with every bud fully opened and every leaf wide spread. So winter passed, and spring came to the woods.

With the coming of spring the two young people, whose presence had incidentally found its way into this story, departed, — departed with a happiness at their hearts that only they know who have been delivered themselves, or have had their friends delivered, from the danger of death, — for Tom had entirely recovered his health, and returned to his city home and the duties of his profession, strong and robust. Their cabin, that the old Trapper had built nigh his own, still stood with all the furniture in it; and often during the summer that followed and the succeeding fall the old Trapper would go to the door, look into the familiar room, and say, "I hope the children be both well," and then closing the door again, would go about his duties.

The young people departed; but the two old men remained. The Trapper, to whose stalwart frame the coming of years seemed to bring no weakness, but only a kind of seasoning, as it were, each leaving him a little thinner but otherwise apparently unchanged, continued to go about his duties with his habitual alacrity, and to enjoy his pleasure with the same zest. Nature was a perpetual charm to him. His trained eye grew each year more skilful in its discriminating sight. His mind opened more widely with a growing apprehension of her loveliness. In a hundred ways she provoked his humor continually to mirth; and at the same time the years made sweet addition to his native reverence. So that he presented that rarest and most beautiful of pictures, — the picture of a man to whose gravity and whose laughter time makes equal addition.

But to his guest the passage of time seemed to multiply his burdens. He gradually weakened through the winter; and unless when talking with Tom in reference to the possible recovery of his property, he showed little interest in the conversation or the enjoyment going on around him. The young man had possessed himself of all the points of the case, and at his departure had left with his unfortunate client the assurance that he would recover from those who had cheated him at least a competence, perhaps a fortune. The old Trapper with his usual hopeful spirit had predicted to the young people, at their going, that what the winter had done for the young lawyer, the summer would do for his client.

"Ye needn't worry about the man," he had said to Tom; "ye needn't worry about him at all. He's sorter low sperited now, and his appetite isn't fust rate; but he'll shirk up when summer comes and go to eatin'; and a man with a good appetite can't die onless by the Lord's appintment and something onnateral happens. No, ye needn't worry about the man, fur I shall keep my eye on him; and ef ye can only warm them vagabonds that's thieved his money from him, and git the word in afore the snow comes, the chances be that he'll live twenty year yit; and twenty year is a good bit of time ef a man hasn't anything to do but enjoy it."

But in spite of the old man's hopefulness, his companion did not gain in strength as time passed. Spring matured into summer. The long, warm August days came with their heat to the hills and the valleys, eliciting a hundred odors from the sods and the trees, — odors pungent with the flavors of health; but however fine their ministry, it seemed unable to revive either his drooping spirits or give strength to his weakened body. The old Trapper strove to interest him in his sports. He even made little excursions here and there by land and water, hoping that the gentle exercise would beget an appetite, and fresh scenes would bring back the departed animation to his spirits.

The Man Who had Missed It accomodated himself with the utmost patience to the plans of the Trapper in his behalf, and evidently strove to show his host that he appreciated the kindness of his intentions. But the desired benefit which the old Trapper longed

for was not experienced. Day by day, his walk grew feebler on the carries, his steps shorter and more unsteady. In the boat his arms weakened more and more at the oar, until his stroke had so little of strength in it as to be inefficient. But the old man still persevered; and placing his guest in the stern of the boat, and taking the oars himself, continued to make little trips, hither and yon, for the entertainment of his companion.

"Ye see," said the Trapper to himself, "it won't do to let a low-sperited man stay in one spot; ye've got to keep him movin', or he'll git wuss and wuss; and ef a man keeps gittin' wuss and wuss, somethin' is sartin to happen; and I'm detarmined to keep the man alive till he gits news from the boy; fur I feel sartin it'll be good news when it comes; and good news is the best physic in the world fur a man that's down sperited as he is."

And so the old man continued with a most touching perseverance his benevolent endeavors.

But in spite of all his efforts his guest did not improve. It was evident that the kindness of the old Trapper touched him deeply, and that he was making every exertion in his power to show his appreciation. On only one theme could the old Trapper make him converse with animation, and that was the prospect of Tom's success in the impending lawsuit.

"Do you think — do you really think, John Norton, that there is any hope?" said The Man Who had Missed It one day, as the old Trapper was rowing him round the lake shore.

"Think?" said the Trapper; "Lord, friend, I know the boy will git yer money! Ye see, he's got right on his side, and that's as good as an extra knife in a scrimmage. And the boy is smart; ye know he's smart, and that counts a good deal in a tussel, when things are sorter nip and tuck. I tell ye, friend, I'm mortally sartin that the boy has them vagabonds on the gridiron, and got them fairly simmerin' already. He'll bring ye in a barrel full of money afore the snow comes."

"I wish I could think so," said the man. "I could do a great deal of good if I had the money; but a man can't live beyond his time. You don't think, John Norton, that a man can live beyond his time, do you?"

"Well, that depends a good deal upon who fixes the time, friend," answered the Trapper. "I don't conceit that a vagabond can live beyend the time of the Lord's appintment, especially ef he is actally ketched in some open deviltry, and the man he's wronged has his finger on the trigger and the sights be right; but ef he be a good man, who hasn't any traps that hasn't his name on 'em, and no pelts in the cabin that he hasn't skinned, I conceit that the Lord gives him a good deal of leeway, and makes the time of his goin' a leetle off and on like; fur raal honest men ain't plenty enough to be shet down on too sudden; and I conceit the Lord might alter his mind a leetle ef there was actaal reason fur it."

And so the two men would converse, and in each successive conversation the hopelessness of the one and

the determined cheerfulness of the other stood in stronger and stronger contrast.

At last autumn came, and the man in very feebleness, unable to accompany the Trapper on his trips, remained in the cabin, having for his companion his dog. The Trapper, while he continued his customary application, shortened the lines of his trapping to that extent that he should not be compelled to stay out on the trail over night. For he used to say to himself, "Yis, I'll shorten the lines this fall so I can come in every night, fur I don't jest like the looks of things, fur it sartinly looks as ef the man was goin', and he sha'n't lack fur comfort while he stays, leastwise, ef my bein' round will help him any." And so the old man shortened his lines, and every evening found him at his cabin ministering to the wants of his guest, both by helpful act and cheerful word. But more than once when the old man was trailing the line of his traps he would pause, and leaning on the muzzle of his rifle remain for several moments in profound thought, and his meditation invariably ended in the remark, "I sartinly hope that the boy is warmin' them vagabonds, and that he'll git the news in soon, fur it looks to me as ef the man was goin'." And more than once, when skinning a mink or an otter, had one been nigh he could have heard him mutter, as he worked, "I hope the boy will git the news in soon, fur it sartinly looks as ef the man was goin'."

Yes, the man was going. Slowly but surely his spirit was preparing to make its exit from the body

which was unable longer to minister to its strength, its joy, or its life. The sun moved southward, the ice formed in thin fringes along the edges of the streams; the sands on the beaches lost their warmth and looked damp, cakey, and cold. For days at a time the rains fell heavily, washing the bright leaves from the trees. The winds roared, and moaned, and whistled. The geese in great wedge-shapes moved southward, each wedge guided by its harsh, unmelodious call. And one day in early November the leathern clouds swept up suddenly, filling the upper dome, smothering the sun, hiding the blue sky, and soon the countless flakes fell downward; and when the Trapper looked out of his door the next morning he looked out upon a world of whiteness, and as he turned back to kindle the fire, he cast his eyes upon the face of his guest as it lay weakly placid on the pillow, sleeping the sleep of those who have not strength or wish to wake; and as he raked the ashes from the great brands, the old man for the first time frankly confessed to himself that his hope was vain, and he said, —

"It's no use. Things have gone wrong with the boy. *The man is goin'*."

Still the man lingered; and though he was very weak, he was nevertheless utterly patient, and more than once made feeble attempts to be even cheerful. Indeed, it was exceedingly touching to see the effort that he was making in his weakness to appear strong and happy, as if he was inwardly fearful lest he should burden with his sadness the spirits of his host.

The old Trapper did the best he knew to sustain and comfort his guest. He would sit in the long evenings and entertain him with the experiences of his life, both grave and mirthful, thereby shortening the otherwise tedious hours with his vivid descriptions, his wise sayings, and his humorous remarks. It was a strange sight, truly, these two men, both knowing that one was nigh to the hour when mortal companionship should end, yet neither making any allusion to the approaching event. The one entertaining the other as best he might with spirited descriptions of men and of scenes among which he had mingled, and of stirring events in which he had been a principal actor; the other listening to the narrations with pleased interest, as if he were not already at that point at which the scenes and doings of this earth become naught, and his eyes were soon to look upon scenes invisible to mortal senses. And yet perhaps it were as well if those of us who are called upon to minister to the elect, the chosen of God to a happier life than they had lived here, should imitate more closely than is our wont the wisdom of the Trapper; for there are ministries too fine for our bungling hands to apply, and there are messages which Heaven sends to the soul too sweet and gentle for our harsh voices to speak in words. Be this as it may, the two men never alluded to the event which both felt was inevitable, and would soon occur, but continued to impart and receive entertainment as man ministers to man.

But one evening, — the Trapper had remained in and

about the cabin all day from a feeling "that things can't last much longer in this way," as he said to himself, — one evening after the dishes had been cleared from the table and from the little stand that stood by the side of the bed on which the Trapper's guest was lying, and the old man had seated himself in front of the fire, the man began the conversation himself.

"John Norton," he said, "day after to-morrow will be Christmas. I came to you on Thanksgiving night, and, as I have got to go away before Christmas Eve comes around, I thought I had better tell you of some things that I would like to have done when I am gone, and perhaps ask your advice about some things. I suppose you know what I mean, John Norton?"

"Yis," said the Trapper, and rising from his chair, he moved it up nearer the bed, and reseated himself facing his guest; "yis, friend, I know what ye mean;" and for a moment the two men looked at each other, — looked at each other calmly as two spirits might look at each other when in the presence of some emergency they are about to draw together in closest companionship.

"I have certainly had a hard time on the earth; have I not, John Norton?"

"Yer trail has been all up-hill, friend," answered the Trapper; and he paused a moment, and then with his eyes still looking into the eyes of his guest, he repeated, "All up-hill, friend."

"What shall I find beyond, John Norton?" queried the man.

"Ye'll find it all level, friend," said the Trapper.

"Do you think," asked the man again, "do you think it will be hard for me to die?"

"It will be easy, friend," answered the Trapper.

The dog Lucky, who was lying on the bed near his master's feet, crept softly up along the side of the body until he could command the faces of both speakers, and as the dialogue advanced he watched them alternately.

"Why do you think I shall die easily?" the man asked.

"Ye be too weak to die hard," the old man responded.

"Are you certain, John Norton?"

"I'm sartin," was the reply.

The dialogue had been carried on in the briefest possible sentences; and between each sentence there was a pause. Each spoke with the deliberation of a man asking and answering momentous questions. In a moment the dialogue proceeded: —

"I shall find her over there, shall I not?" asked the man.

"You will find her," was the sententious response.

"In a body?"

"In a body," was the answer.

"And the unknown, those I have never seen, John Norton?"

"The Maker of sight will give ye new eyes there, and ye'll see."

After this there was silence. The man evidently

was pondering, as a man ponders when he lies on the edge of the Great Unseen. A log in the fireplace broke in the middle and flamed brilliantly. One of the hounds rose, turned round, and lay down again. Lucky rubbed his head in mute tenderness against the arm of his master that lay within reach.

Outside the world was white. The moon stood in the sky. Above the moon — what was there above the moon? — Heaven? Perhaps.

"Where shall I go, old Trapper, when I go out of this body and this cabin?"

"All old trails eend at the edge of the Great Clearin'. From there each sperit blazes its own line," answered the Trapper. "I have seed where a good many trails stopped, friend. I have never seed the direction they took arter that."

"It would be comforting to know just what would happen after death," mused the man.

"Ye never know what a sunrise is till ye see it," returned the Trapper; "it'll be sunrise — sunrise arter night — that's enough;" and the old man said it with the reverence of profoundest trust.

The man toyed with one of Lucky's ears a moment, — looked at him as a man can only look at a creature from whom he had received no pain, but who has given to him such faith and love as belong only to deep affection, — and then he said, —

"Will Lucky be there?"

It was a strange coincidence — a strange coincidence, truly; — but when the man asked, "Will Lucky be

there?" the dog, with loving tongue, lapped the back of his master's hand, as it lay against his muzzle. Looked into his master's face and lapped his hand. That was all.

"Yer question is answered," said the Trapper.

"I accept the answer," said the man. "A creature of such intelligence and such affection cannot die. Such love can never perish."

After this for several minutes neither spoke. At length the Trapper said, —

"Ye said, friend, ye had somethin' to tell me, — some directions and the like; — somethin', perhaps, ye wanted done, and maybe it's as well ye should speak of it now. I've done a good many things fur redskin and white both arter they was gone; and ef ye want anythin' done, friend, ef the doin' of it be within the range of my gifts, ye have only to say it; fur it will be done accordin' as ye say."

"Of course," said the man, speaking after a pause, "I want you to bury my body after I have left it."

"It shall be done," responded the Trapper.

"I wish you would bury it just by the rock, on the bank to the east, which commands a view up the lake."

"It's a cheerful spot for a grave," answered the Trapper, "for the view is a good un. And yer body, when ye have left it, shall be buried where ye say."

Again there was a pause.

"Have ye any wish," asked the Trapper, "as to how I should bury yer body, arter ye're gone? Any directions about the sarvice, — any varses of Scriptur' or the like?"

"None at all," answered the man; "you may follow your own notions, John Norton. There will be but one mourner;" and he looked at his dog.

"Two," returned the Trapper.

"Thank you," replied the man; "I believe you," and he smiled gratefully.

"What about the dog?" said the Trapper.

The man hesitated a moment, and then timidly, "He can be of no service to you?"

The Trapper understood the hesitation of his guest, and answered, —

"The dog shall stay with me till he dies. He shall not lack for food, and a corner of the hearthstone shall be his."

"That is all, I think," said the man, "unless — but he *won't get it.*"

"I don't think he will," said the Trapper; "no, I don't think he will; but ef he should, what do ye wish done with it then?"

"I have thought it all over," said the man. "I held to it as my last hope; but he would have sent us word before now. In my pack you will find a paper; in it are written directions. There will be nothing to give, but, if there were, the paper gives it as I would have it given."

"Is there anything else," asked the Trapper.

"Yes," said the man, and he stretched forth his hand, which the Trapper met with his own, "yes, John Norton, there is something else: the gratitude of a dying man, with a bed to die on, because you have

given it to him. A house to die in, because you opened its doors at his coming. The gratitude of a dying man who owes more happiness in the last year of his life than the world had given him in twenty years, to you. The gratitude of a dying man who knows his body will have burial by friendly hands, and not be put in the pauper's corner, by the cold charity of those who are glad to get rid of a beggar. The God of the friendless reward you abundantly, old Trapper, as your deeds deserve, and give you peace in your dying hour, as your goodness has given me, and a friendly hand to bury your body as you, I know, will bury mine!"

"Amen," said the Trapper; and the two men unclasped their hands, the one turning toward the fire, the other sinking back upon the pillow, from which in his earnestness he had partially risen.

The Trapper busied himself for a few moments in mending the fire. He placed some large logs in such a way that they would hold their heat during the night; and then, as he prepared to go to his own bed, he said, —

"Friend, you will wake me ef you want anythin' during the night. A word will be enough: I sleep light."

"Yes, I will wake you if I want anything," answered the man. "I feel as if I should sleep now."

This was all that was said. In a few moments the Trapper stretched himself on his bed and fell asleep. The man moved himself on to his other side, put his

hand under his cheek, and in a moment he, too, fell asleep.

And so both slept. One awoke — the Trapper — awoke at earliest dawn; but the other slept on, — slept through the dawn, and the day; slept on and woke not forever, at least, the eyes of his body never opened, for THE MAN WHO HAD MISSED IT was gone.

The Trapper awoke, and, stepping to the bedside of his guest, gave one look, and then he went to the large chest, took a piece of white cloth from its depths, and spread it tenderly over the sleeper's face, and as he turned away said simply to himself, —

"Perhaps it was the best way."

Christmas Day! In the cities the bells were ringing. In the wilderness no motion stirred the air into sound. On the bank which commanded the view up the lake, near the rock, was a grave — a grave half filled. At one end of the grave stood the Trapper, leaning on his shovel. At the other end of the grave stood a dog shivering. Far up the lake a runner on snowshoes was hurrying toward the north. When he reached the northern shore and clomb the bank, the grave was filled. The runner took a letter from his breast pocket and handed to the Trapper. The Trapper took it, studied the address a moment, and said, —

"Friend, ye'll find fire and food in the cabin."

The man understood the command, and shuffled toward the house.

The old man broke the seal, and spreading the letter out on his knee studied its contents. The hand in

which it was written was none of the plainest to eyes unused to penmanship.

"I don't git the run of all of it," said the old man to himself; "but the boy says he's got his case, and here is a figger 2 and a 3 and a 5, — yis, that's a 5 — and the three ciphers be plain. Two hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars — it's a big sum, no doubt, — though I don't quite git the size of the figgers." And the old man looked at the letter, and then he looked at the grave. "It's a big sum — it's a big sum," he added, as he turned toward the cabin. "The boy has done well, but the news comes a leetle too late."

It was evening. The old Trapper sat in his cabin alone. In his hand was the letter the runner had brought him. By dint of great perseverance he had mastered every word of its contents. It was written in Tom's happiest vein, and told of a great success. The old man folded the letter carefully, laid it on the table, and again he said, --

"It came a leetle too late; yis, it came a leetle too late. I'll go and see where Lucky is;" and rising from his chair, he put on his cap and opened the door. The moon was shining at its full, and as he neared the grave he saw the object of his search lying at full length upon it. He whistled to him, but he did not stir. He approached and put his hand upon the body. The dog was dead.

The old Trapper rose, looked a moment at the grave and at the dead dog upon it, and as he turned away again he said, —

"Perhaps it was the best way."

Perhaps it was.

That night one looking through the window might have seen the old Trapper sitting by the fire with a book on his knees — a large book, bound with board covers, dressed in leather, — a book printed with large, old fashioned letters. The old man was reading aloud to himself, moving his finger slowly along as he read the words.

"It says here," he muttered, "it says here, 'That to him that hath shall be given.' That's sartinly rational ef the man has behaved himself. But 'That from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath.' That bothers me," muttered the Trapper. "I know it be so, for the grave by the rock proves it; but why it be so, that sartinly bothers me. Perhaps Henry can tell me when he comes in."

THE END.